



BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Given Delhi any quality, double engine doesn't sound reassuring.

BIG PICTURE



THE NEW SUGAR BARONS
PAGE 11

BONE OF CONTENTION: CHINA TRADE SURPLUS OF \$1 TRILLION

CLSA goes 'overweight' on India, reverses call on China after Trump return to power

Valuation in India is now a 'little more palatable' after sharp FII outflow: Agency

HITESH VYAS,
GEORGE MATHEW
& RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, NOV 15

INJUST over a week since Donald Trump won the US Presidency, Hong Kong-based brokerage firm CLSA raised its India allocation to a 20 per cent overweight, while cutting exposure to China. This is seen as a tactical reversal from its early October update when it went 'overweight' on China fol-

lowing Beijing's first stimulus on September 24. China's second tranche of a \$1.4 trillion package came on November 8 and yet another likely in January 2025.

Turning 'overweight' in India suggests a brokerage house allocating higher resources to Indian equity compared to the weight India has in a benchmark index, say MSCI.

The reversal is also attributed to an escalation of a trade war between US and China with Trump proposing up to 60 per cent tariff

on Chinese imports into the US during his Presidential campaign and an overwhelming stimulus package by Beijing.

Trump's victory has made the brokerage reverse its October call, with China now an 'equal weight', and India turning 'overweight'. This incidentally comes when India has recorded steady net foreign investor selling of a cumulative \$14.2 billion since early October (almost fully unwinding the \$16.6 billion of net purchases from June through September).

While highlighting that valuations in India continue to be "expensive", CLSA underlined that India appears as among the least exposed of regional markets to Trump's adverse trade policy. Indian government officials are of the view that Trump as President would not be as detrimental on India's export basket as those of other countries, especially China.

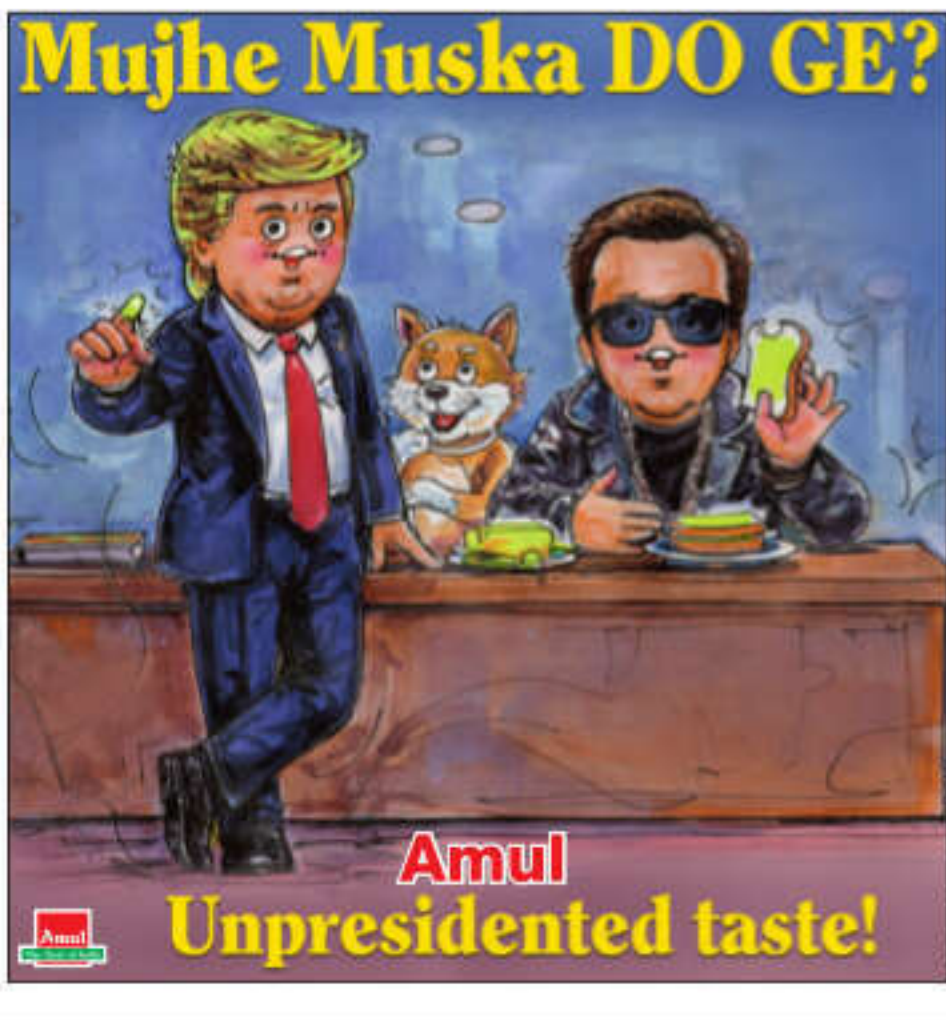
In a note titled "Pouncing Tiger, prevaricating Dragon", CLSA said that misfortune can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED

Why bet on India

THE PROSPECTS of an escalating trade war between the US and China, with Trump proposing to impose up to 60 per cent tariff on Chinese imports, and a lower than expected stimulus by Beijing has prompted the global brokerage firm to bet on India now.



Pak drops PoK from Champions Trophy tour after Indian board files protest

PCB itinerary unacceptable, Jay Shah told ICC; tour now only in host cities

DEVENDRA PANDEY &
SANDEEP DWIVEDI
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI,
NOVEMBER 15

THE PAKISTAN Cricket Board (PCB) is learnt to have agreed to restrict the tour of the Champions Trophy to the three host cities of Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) filed an objection with the International Cricket Council (ICC) over the PCB move to include Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in the tour itinerary.

On Thursday, the PCB, in a post on X, said: "Get ready, Pakistan! The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 trophy tour kicks off in Islamabad on 16 November, also visiting scenic travel destinations like Skardu, Murree, Hunza and Muzaffarabad. Catch a glimpse of the trophy which Sarfaraz Ahmed lifted in 2017 at The Oval, from 16-24 November." Following this, BCCI secretary



Trophy tour will kick off on November 16: PCB

Jay Shah lodged a protest with the ICC.

"PCB is already in discussions with the ICC on how to proceed with the trophy tour to ensure the Champions Trophy is continued to be promoted in Pakistan," a PCB source told *The Indian Express*. "The ICC Champions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Shinde: Will continue schemes for the poor, but won't compete in handing out cash

VALLABH OZARKAR
& SANDEEP SINGH
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 15

COUNTING ON the success of the Ladki Bahin Yojana and other welfare schemes to return the Mahayuti to power, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said Friday that while his government rolled out with the schemes to help the poor and needy which he will continue to do, he will not get into any competition on welfare schemes, and that the government cannot be run by only distributing money.

"Hum chaddar dekh kar pair failane wale hain... we only say what can be done within limits," Shinde told *The Indian Express* in an interview as the state braces for the Assembly elections on November 20.



EKNATH SHINDE
MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

"See, the government cannot be run by only distributing money. We will not get into any competition on this. But helping the poor and bringing them into the mainstream is the job of the government and it is our task to bring them out of poverty and we will continue to do that," he said.

With BJP leaders raising

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

11 FROM JHARKHAND ARRESTED

Two in terror module were beneficiaries of PM-Kisan, planned to gather funds: Police

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

OVER TWO months after it arrested 11 people and claimed to have busted an "Al-Qaeda-inspired terror module", the Delhi Police has informed a city court that the "accused persons planned to accumulate funds for jihad through PM-Kisan" scheme or the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi.

A probe conducted by the Special Cell of Delhi Police claimed that two of the arrested persons were beneficiaries of PM-Kisan and had given money for purchase of arms for terror activities.

It is learnt that police are look-

ing for the persons who allegedly filled the form for the scheme at the behest of the accused.

According to police, the arrests were made on August 22 based on inputs received by Central agencies that a highly radicalised Jharkhand-based group and sympathisers in Delhi were planning a terror attack.

"After their arrest, they were questioned by Delhi Police and the Central agencies. Later, they were sent to judicial custody in Tihar Jail. But on coming across fresh evidence, police obtained six-day custody of eight accused earlier this week," an officer said.

In an order issued November 12, Additional Sessions Judge Dr Hardeep Kaur at the Patiala House Courts said, "An

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



RECORDS TUMBLE AT JO'BURG

Sanju Samson (109 off 56 balls) and Tilak Varma (120 off 47) recorded the first 200-plus partnership for India in T20Is against South Africa in Johannesburg on Friday. India posted 283/1, their second highest total in T20Is. India's 23 sixes were also the most by a team in a T20I involving Full Member sides. AP

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RECENT TREND IN APEX COURT

In verdicts with dissent, SC judges refer to and rebut each other — via their opinions

From flagging criticism of Krishna Iyer to no 'meeting of minds' on AMU

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

IN THE landmark ruling delivered by the Supreme Court on November 5 that not all private property can be considered community resource, a dissent-

ing opinion and a concurrent opinion deeply contested a sentence in the majority verdict authored by former Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud.

In her opinion, Justice B V Nagarathna flagged a comment from the majority verdict: "The Krishna Iyer doctrine does a dis-

service to the broad and flexible spirit of the Constitution."

In at least seven instances, Justice Nagarathna took exception to "branding the judges of this Court of the yesteryears as doing a disservice to the Constitution". Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, too, who wrote a dissent,

criticised the use of the phrase "Krishna Iyer doctrine" calling it "harsh, and could have been avoided."

While the sentence in question does not find mention in Justice Chandrachud's final opinion, presumably removed after

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Data on tourist footfall Chinese, hidden agenda, says Goa minister

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, NOVEMBER 15

DAYS AFTER his department filed a police complaint against an entrepreneur, whose post critical of Goa had unleashed a flurry of social media responses, the state's Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte has told *The Indian Express* that a "hidden agenda" and "ulterior



Khaunte: Plan to create false propaganda against state

motives" may have been at play to malign the image of the state. During an interview, when asked about social media posts

about "negative experiences" of tourists, Khaunte said, "Goa has always been a preferred tourist destination but every year we have somebody, some influencer, who looks at it in a different way. Last year, some people tried to defame Goa but it did not work. We have placed figures (of tourist footfalls) in the Assembly and maybe even in Parliament.

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THE WORLD



LANKA PRESIDENT'S LEFT COALITION WINS 2/3RD MAJORITY

ROBERT F KENNEDY JR IS TRUMP PICK FOR HEALTH SECRETARY
PAGE 14

Grief, anger in Gujarat village after 'unnecessary angioplasty' claims 2 lives

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

BRENDAN DABHI
BORISANA (MEHSANA), NOV 15

AT BORISANA village in Gujarat's Mehsana, the grief is palpable. The village, 35 kilometres from Ahmedabad, is slowly coming to terms with the loss of two residents — Mahesh Girdhar Barot (52) and Nagar Moti Senma (75) — allegedly to unnecessary angioplasty surgeries done without their consent. Both were beneficiaries of Ayushman

Bharat PMJAY.

Since then, Dr Prashant Vazirani, a visiting cardiologist who allegedly conducted the procedures following a health camp set up by Khyati Multispecialty Hospital, has been arrested. Four directors of the hospital have also been named in three FIRs.

At the village, some homes are still waiting for their loved ones, who too underwent such procedures but survived, to return from follow-up treatment.

According to Barot's family, the 52-year-old man was so fit that he would cycle 10 kilometres to work every day. His

nephew Sunny shows a video of Barot dancing to a Ramdhan being played at the local temple, just a week before his death.

Mahesh, his family says, was the youngest of six siblings — and the first to die. Jairam, his elder brother, claimed he had no comorbidities, and it was the single biggest mistake of his life to let Mahesh climb into a bus arranged by the hospital to take residents to the health camp. Before the day ended, Mahesh, a bachelor and the primary breadwinner of his family, which included two widowed sisters and their children, was dead, "with the ventilator still pumping be-



Banner of the Khyati Hospital medical camp still hanging at the Mahadev temple in Borisana village. Brendan Dabhi

side him", his family said.

It was on Sunday that the hospital conducted a free health camp in the nondescript village, where even the signboard is washed out and illegible. Held at the Mahadev temple premises, it was attended by more than 80 residents, mostly farm labourers or workers in plastic factories.

The next day, a bus from the hospital picked up 19 villagers, who consented for a more comprehensive check-up, and brought them to Ahmedabad. According to the FIR filed by the state government, the hospital allegedly conducted angiographies on all of them, then angio-

plasties on seven. The FIR states that these procedures were unnecessary and without informed consent, and the hospital did not provide adequate postoperative care, leading to the death of the two men.

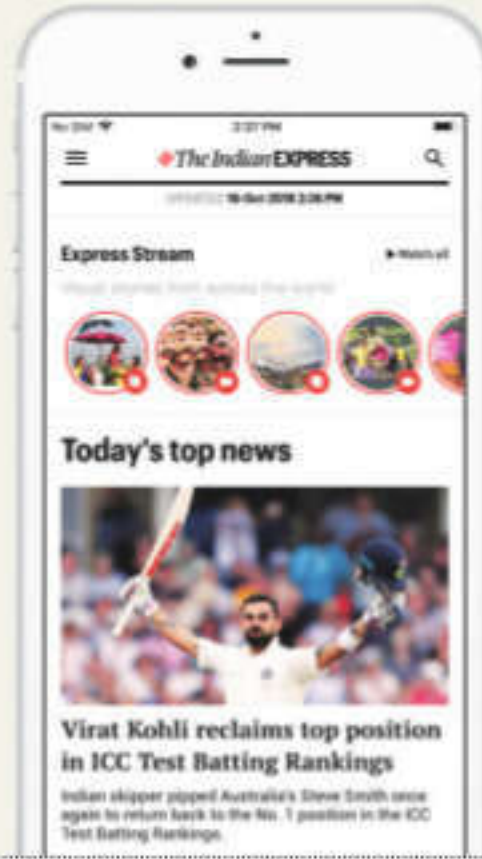
Outside Nagar Senma's home, his elder son Bharat sits with head shaved, next to a garlanded photograph of his father. The family is so poor that even as the period of mourning continues, the other son, Praveen, has gone back to work on a farm.

Bacchu Govaji Barot, a 77-year-old who also underwent the procedure and now has a stent in his artery, told *The Indian*

Express that "the hospital officials took our thumb impressions on a letterhead after they had already started the operation". "Afterwards, they put us in a ward where nobody came to even look at us," he claimed.

He claimed that before his death, Senma "started vomiting and convulsing", and while "the staff came and tried to revive him, he was dead not long after". "I also saw Mahesh... I called my daughter from the hospital and told her to call his brother Jairam. But by the time Jairam reached, Mahesh was dead," he said.

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EXPRESS AUDIO

'Bulldozer justice', the role of mediation centres, & SDM slap row

In this episode of *3 Things*, we discuss the SC's ruling on the practice of 'bulldozer justice' and how CM Yogi popularized it. We also talk about mediation centers and the controversy involving an independent candidate from Rajasthan slapping an SDM

Bareilly BJP leader, brother among three booked for gangrape

AMIT SHARMA
MEERUT, NOVEMBER 15

THE FORMER city unit chief of the BJP's minority cell in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, his brother, and an accomplice were booked on charges of gangrape on Thursday after a 30-year-old woman filed a complaint against them at the local police station.

In the FIR, the woman has accused Anees Ansari, who had resigned from his post after a series of audio clips of purported conversations between him and the complainant went viral, of sexually exploiting her for more than two years. She has also alleged that he coerced her to divorce her husband by promising to marry her.

However, Ansari denied all the allegations, calling them "baseless". His son has also been

booked for allegedly destroying chats and video clips between Ansari and the woman.

The alleged gangrape took place on November 10 and the woman also claimed that the police did not lodge an FIR, following which she lodged a written complaint with Bareilly Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Anurag Arya. After the SSP directed the jurisdictional police station to lodge an FIR, a case was filed against Ansari, his brother Javed, and accomplice Javed alias Babloo under Section 70 (gangrape) of the BNS. Ansari's son was booked under BNS Section 238 (destroying evidence).

In the FIR, the woman alleged that she was gangraped by Ansari, his brother and one of their henchmen when she tried to put pressure on him to marry her as he had allegedly promised.

• Bodies of woman & 2 kids found

Meitei groups have alleged that they were abducted by armed men, allegedly from the Hmar community, who had attacked the area Monday morning.

Following the violence at the relief camp, security forces had gunned down 10 of the armed men. Earlier this week, the bodies of two elderly Meitei men — also residents of the relief camp — had been found in the area.

On Thursday, the Centre reimposed the Disturbed Areas status under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in the jurisdiction of six police stations in the valley areas including Jiribam.

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued the notification, citing the "volatile" situation in Manipur and instances of "active participation of insurgent groups in heinous acts of violence".

• Grief, anger in Gujarat village

Popat Ram Raval, 52, a diabetic who also underwent the procedure, said many of the patients were confused by medical terms and the "sophisticated" setting at the hospital. "I knew something was wrong, but nobody said anything. We just couldn't speak up," said Raval, who returned on Friday morning after spending the night at a local government hospital for a sudden fever.

The Indian Express also visited

the home of 66-year-old Dinesh Sadhu who, as of Friday evening, was in the ICU of a hospital in Ahmedabad. His wife Bhagwati, who had insisted on accompanying her husband to the procedure on Monday, said, "I just forced them to take me along. They made me sit downstairs in the reception but at least I was close to my husband. It was there that I learnt that two men had died."

FROM PAGE ONE CLSA goes 'overweight' on India

FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

happen in threes and it has played out for Chinese equities over the past week. The brokerage said it was sceptical on the endurance of the China equity melt up and its initial reaction was to rent rather than buy the rally.

"Yet we committed a little more at the start of October by tactically deploying some of our over exposure to India towards China, at the time reducing our Indian overweight to 10 per cent from 20 per cent and raising our China allocation to a 5 per cent overweight from benchmark. We now reverse that trade," CLSA said in its note to clients. It said though valuation in India is expensive, it is now a "little more palatable". The note said that the recent China's stimulus package suggests risk management rather than expansionary policy.

London-based independent think tank Oxford Economics also expected the impact of US tariffs to drag down total exports from China and other targeted economies in the medium term. However, the impact will be concentrated in specific sectors, with significant consequences for affected industries such as automobiles and steel.

"Our scenarios suggest that the shift in the tariff regime might reduce total Chinese exports in 2023 by just 0.5 per cent, if the tariffs are targeted. Needless to say, further retaliation and larger subsequent waves of tariffs in response could amplify and broaden these effects, potentially triggering wider policy shifts such as a doubling down on industrial policy in China," it said.

Last week, China unveiled \$1.4

trillion debt package to boost its flagging economic growth. CLSA said that Finance Minister Lan Fo'an has left the door open into the new year for further measures to recapitalise banks, absorb excess property inventories and stimulate consumption, but it lacks confidence that the magnitude would be sufficient to warrant China's outperformance.

"In the light of recent developments we no longer have sufficient conviction to maintain an above benchmark exposure on Chinese equities heading into 2025," CLSA said. Trump 2.0 heralds a trade war escalation, which could likely prove disruptive for Chinese equity assets and the renminbi, given that China's economic growth has become far more dependent on exports than in 2018, it said.

"Initial Trump cabinet appointees appear consistent in their China-hawkish credentials, but the impact of their actions will not be felt for more than another two months. The concern with this approach is that the market will be essentially directionless if there is a policy air pocket until Trump's intentions are better formulated," CLSA said in a note.

This comes as China's overall annual trade surplus, expected to soon surpass a record \$1 trillion, groundwork for a more aggressive US trade war against China during Trump's second term — backed by a Republican-controlled Senate — has begun to take shape. According to a *Financial Times* report, Robert Lighthizer, a staunch protectionist and the architect of Trump's tariff battles, is set for another stint pursuing Trump's frequently cited trade goals of reciprocal market access. Moreover, other Trump appointees, including China hardliner Marco Rubio as Secretary of State, have signalled that Trump's second term could go further in containing China compared to his first term.

The likelihood of a Trump-led trade war with China comes at a time when China's trade surplus with the US in 2023 reached \$380 billion. The comparable number barely stood at \$70 billion in 2005. Lighthizer, US trade representative, under Trump's first term has said that US liberal trade policies, especially towards communist China, was a mistake. According to CLSA, India appears as among the least exposed of regional markets to Trump's adverse trade policy.

It said MSCI India has corrected by close to 10 per cent in US dollar terms since it top sliced its exposure in early October, or by 12 per cent since the 27 September peak.

"Paradoxically, India has recorded steady net foreign investor selling of a cumulative \$14.2 billion since early October (almost fully unwinding the \$16.6 billion of net purchases from June through September), while investors we have met over the year have been waiting specifically for such a buying opportunity to address underexposure to what is arguably the principal scalable growth opportunity in EM (emerging markets)," it said.

The brokerage further said India remains sensitive to energy prices (86 per cent of the country's

oil consumption is imported, 49 per cent of natural gas and 35 per cent of its coal needs), and it remains concerned about the potential for risk premium in the oil price or at worst, a substantive supply interruption from Iran-Israel tensions.

The note said that the Reserve Bank of India has managed to accumulate a veritable war chest of FX (forex) reserves (some US\$700bn worth) which it actively deploys for FX intervention in defence of the rupee.

On corporate results in India, CLSA said through earnings momentum (in Q2 FY25) has softened, the outlook remains robust. India is one of the few emerging markets where a relationship between corporate earnings growth and the changes in the pace of economic output holds true, attributable to the country's more domestically oriented equity market, it said.

The brokerage highlighted that a chief risk for the Indian equity outlook is the acceleration in primary issuance which ultimately threatens to swamp the secondary market with supply.

"Cumulative 12-month rolling issuance (IPOs and secondary offerings) reached a record \$66 billion in October, although we need to control for the increase in overall market cap when making historical comparisons," it said. As a proportion of market cap, issuance has reached 1.5 per cent, close to the same level at which it peaked in the last four cycles in Indian issuance which in turn coincided closely with peaks in secondary market momentum, CLSA said.

• 2 in terror module were beneficiaries of PM-Kisan, pooling funds: Police

application has been moved by the investigation officer seeking police custody of eight accused for six days as witness stated some other persons are also involved in conspiracy, those persons are to be identified and interrogated. Witness revealed that accused persons planned to accumulate funds for jihad through PM Kisan Yojna, persons who filled the forms on accused person's behalf are to be identified."

Abu Bakr Sabbaq, advocate for 10 of the arrested people, said, "Without any concrete evidence, the Delhi Police is framing all the persons. With the help of this false narrative, they want to cut out Muslims from getting benefits of government policies. Before the election in Jharkhand, they wanted to create a false narrative... They did not get a single witness while making this huge arms and ammunition recovery, which is suspicious."

Asked about the specific police allegation related to the PM-Kisan scheme, Sabbaq said, "They

are yet to file their final chargesheet. Things will be clear only after the submission of the final chargesheet."

According to police, during the raids on August 22, six arrested persons — identified as Anamul Ansari (32), Shahbaz Ansari (32), Altaf Ansari (35), Hasan Ansari (32), Arshad Khan (26), Umar Farooq (20) — were found taking weapon-training from two trainers at Sare Kalan Ki Pahadi, Ajmeri Naka in Rajasthan's Bhiwadi.

"Two trainers and a person who was taking training managed to escape from the spot. Police have recovered an assault rifle, one pistol, one revolver, 66 live cartridges of different bore, one hand grenade, key remote control mechanism with battery, one hand-made carbine, one dummy INSAS rifle," a police officer said.

Another raid was conducted in Ranchi from where five persons — identified as Dr Ishitiyaq Ahmad alias Captain (49), Mohd Rizwan (40), Moti-Ur-Rehman (40), Mohd Rahmantulla (30) and Faizan

Ahmad (47) — were arrested. Police said one handmade SLR, one handmade carbine and Rs 5.1 lakh were recovered from their possession.

"All 11 accused are from different villages in Ranchi. After questioning and with the help of technical surveillance, police found that two of the accused, Hasan and Anamul, made multiple visits to the Central Jail in Jamshedpur to meet one Abdul Rehman Katki after posing as his relatives," the officer said. The probe claimed the module was headed by Dr Ahmad and all members were taking weapon firing training in Bhiwadi.

ASJ Hardeep Kaur's order noted: "Anamul tried to procure SIM, but could not, so he must have approached any other person for SIM procurement, that persons has to be identified, witness revealed that Umar bought firecrackers for preparation of bomb on the behalf of Anamul, and witness also revealed that accused travelled to Bud Kohkra,

Chatra, Baans Jodi and many other places to gather young persons for jihad, who are to be identified."

"Council for accused persons submits that as per the grounds stated in the application, there is no need to grant police custody of the accused to the IO as they can be interrogated in judicial custody. He further submitted that he has already moved an application on the ground that police have beaten the accused in police custody and forcefully signed the blank papers," it stated.

"In view of the submissions made, application stands allowed... Accused Anamul, Shahbaz, Hasan, Arshad, Umar, Dr Ishitiyaque, Rizwan and Rahmantulla are remanded to police custody and they will be produced on November 18... Needless to state, it will be the duty of the IO to take care of health and safety of the accused in terms of Section 56 of BNS... They must be medically examined during police custody remand as per the applicable rules," the order stated.

• Pak drops PoK from trophy tour

Trophy tour was planned in consultation and with the approval of the ICC. The PCB had not unilaterally finalised the trophy tour schedule," the source said.

A top BCCI official said that Jay Shah, who is set to take over as ICC Chairman on December 1, told the ICC it was unacceptable that the PCB was planning a trophy tour in PoK.

"BCCI secretary Shah has objected to the PCB's idea to hold a Champions Trophy tour in PoK. The BCCI has no problem if the tour is conducted in any other city of Pakistan or even in a stadium outside PoK or in a mall. But they cannot hold it in PoK," a BCCI official told The Indian Express on Friday.

No comment was available from the ICC.

The tournament, last held in 2017, is already in controversy after the BCCI asked for its games to be shifted to Dubai because of security concerns, but the PCB has not agreed to the demand.

The top eight teams of the world will take part in next year's 50-overs Champions Trophy which will run from February 19 to March 9 with Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi as host cities.

The trophy tour is a promotional event before a major ICC tournament.

With India wanting to play all their games in Dubai, the tournament could have a hybrid model like when India played its games in Sri Lanka when PCB was the host nation for the Asia Cup last year.

But the Pakistan government is learnt to have asked the PCB not to agree to India's demand of moving their Champions Trophy games to Dubai.

• Data on tourist footfall Chinese, hidden agenda: Goa minister

Now suddenly, a social media post talks about data from the 'China Economic Information Centre'. The minute the word China comes, some alarm bells start ringing. So, it looks like a plan or a hidden agenda to create false propaganda about the state, which has been a preferred destination of both international and domestic tourists."

Asked about his usage of the term "false propaganda", he said, "The false propaganda is maybe with an ulterior motive. This definitely induced fear within the local communities and led us to act on it since false data was disseminated on social media. As an extension of the false propaganda, we saw social media handlers post about their experiences in Goa. We acknowledge there are some issues but every tourism state faces them."

Last week, the Goa government's tourism department had filed a police complaint against Ramanuj Mukherjee, founder of an online legal learning platform, alleging that he was "disseminating false data". Mukherjee had told *The Indian Express* that Goa state authorities appear to be "misusing law to shut down criticism", instead of acting on complaints raised by the tourists on social media.

In a social media post later, he tagged Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and wrote, "Even if the data shared by me was incorrect, you must realise that the data itself did not make the post viral. This issue went viral because it led to an eruption of people's feelings. Tourists went to Goa and felt cheated. They spoke about their grievances."

On whether the tourism department's police complaint was an overreaction, Khaunte said, "What do you expect the state to

do? Do we have to be sympathetic to someone who is playing with the country and the state? Can you imagine somebody disseminating Chinese data and Indians are talking about it? Our data is available in the public domain. Take that and discuss with us. However, only data is not the answer. Post Covid, we need to talk about quality over quantity. Tourists today want a more immersive experience and want to travel to tranquil places. We are now promoting Goa beyond the beaches."

He acknowledged that some of the grievances expressed by tourists were legitimate. "For instance, illegal tours have been there for a long time. We have run an aggressive campaign over the past two years to weed them out and continue to do so. Second, there is a charge of a 'taxi mafia' in Goa. I view it differently. We have many international tourists, who visit Goa annually and have had a rapport with taxi drivers for decades, and treat them like an extended family due to past experiences. Yes, there are a couple of rotten apples which spoil the image of taxi drivers. About the high fares and hotel costs, the government cannot curb any rates. The rates are driven by market forces. If there is a hotel room being sold at price 'x', it is business. It is a challenge and we acknowledge it," he said.

"We have also been talking to trade bodies, but we cannot curb rates. We have also taken up the issue with the Civil Aviation Ministry and are looking to expand connectivity as we need to connect to more emerging markets like the UAE, south-east Asian countries, Germany and western Europe," the minister said.

• Shinde on schemes for the poor

slogans such as '*batenge toh katenge*' and '*ek hain toh safe hain*', Shinde defended the slogans of his alliance partners and said it is being done to avoid what happened in the Lok Sabha polls, that it is important to unite voters and to enthrone them to come out and vote.

Unity is important for development and to motivate the cadre. We do not want a repetition in Vidhan Sabha of what we experienced during the Lok Sabha (elections)... We saw less percentage of voting and so it is being done to motivate the Mahayuti cadre though people are taking it in another way," Shinde said.

"Prime Minister Modi ji is saying that we should be united. He has not taken the name of any religion or caste. He said '*ek hain toh safe hain*' which means we all should be united and contest the polls by bringing all communities together and increase the voting percentage. We can increase it by coming together."

He criticised the Congress for indulging in "casteist and communal politics by creating a divide" between people and for "creating a fake narrative of changing the Constitution and removing reservation".

Taking on the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray — the two factions are contesting against each other in 49 constituencies across the state — Shinde said that while he defeated them in the Lok Sabha elections with a better strike rate, it will get even better this election. "Iss chunav mein ab doodh ka doodh aur paani ka paani ho jayega as people are going to vote for those who work and not for those who sit at home. People need development and welfare schemes," he said.

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Sudden spurt of illegal immigrants before polls, exercise caution: L-G to Chief Secy, top cop

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

FLAGGING A “sudden” spurt in their numbers in the Capital, Lieutenant Governor (L-G) V K Saxena on Friday asked the authorities concerned, including the police, to keep an eye on “illegal immigrants in Delhi”.

Saxena’s directions, which come in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly elections set to be held early next year, flagged alleged efforts being made to prepare identification documents such as Aadhaar and voter identity cards, among others, for such individuals “on the basis of fake documents and adopting manipulative process”.

“Hon’ble Lt Governor’s attention has been drawn to reports on social media and other reliable sources that there is a sudden spurt in the number illegal immigrants in Delhi. There is also rise in encroachment by such people on public road, footpath, parks etc,” a written communication to the Delhi Chief Secretary, police commissioner and the respective chiefs of civic bodies such as Municipal Corporation of Delhi and New Delhi Municipal Council, stated. “There are reports that efforts are underway for getting their identity documents such as Aadhaar, election identity card,

etc, prepared on the basis of fake documents and adopting manipulative process. These documents are being claimed as citizenship documents by these illegal immigrants,” the communication added.

Voter identity cards, if issued to illegal immigrants, would provide them “the most powerful right of democracy that is, the Right to Vote in our country”, the communication stated. It added that giving such rights to “illegal immigrants cannot be accepted by any Indian Citizen” and can even be detrimental to national security.

Saxena directed the Chief Secretary to issue instructions to district magistrates to exercise “extra vigil” while verifying people applying for identity documents. “Separately, the police commissioner may also issue instructions to field level officials to be extra vigilant, specially while undertaking inspections of squatters along roadside and on vacant government land,” he said.

Further, the L-G asked the Delhi Police to conduct a special drive for one month to identify illegal immigrants and take action in coordination with central agencies, while all government agencies were asked to ensure that “no unauthorised occupation of public places takes place anywhere in the city” as per Supreme Court directions.

AMIT SHAH UNVEILS STATUE ON BIRSA MUNDA’S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Sarai Kale Khan renamed Birsa Munda Chowk, AAP govt questions decision

JATINANAND
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah named the Sarai Kale Khan intersection as ‘Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chowk’ after inaugurating the tribal cultural icon’s statue Friday. Soon after, the AAP government in the Capital questioned if due process was followed to rename the place.

Shah had unveiled a statue of Birsa Munda Friday afternoon near the Sarai Kale Khan Chowk on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary year.

The event followed the renaming of the intersection by Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) Manohar Lal Khattar.

However, AAP sources sought to know whether the proposal for the renaming of the crossing – where east, central and north Delhi converge – was vetted by the road naming authority that



presides over the process.

Sources in the Union government, on the other hand, challenged the contention stating that the name ‘Sarai Kale Khan’ – which was neither delineated nor “officially named” – “did not exist in any government records” pertaining to the Capital.

Delhi government sources, however, said naming a location was the prerogative of the State

Naming Authority which, at the moment, did not exist in the Capital since it was yet to be constituted.

“Currently, Delhi does not have a road naming authority, so where was the permission to rename (Sarai Kale Khan Chowk to) Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chowk? This road falls under Delhi government’s PWD. Where is the order regarding the renaming?” a Delhi

government source asked.

Sources in the Union government, however, contended this. “Sarai Kale Khan is the name of the area and ISBT there will still be known by the same name...there was no mention of Sarai Kale Khan in government records; the renaming of the intersection is the first of its kind when it comes to the representation of tribal identity in the capital,” a source in the

Union government said.

At the event, where Khattar, Delhi L-G VK Saxena, MoS Harsh Malhotra and other dignitaries were in attendance, the Union Home Minister said that in 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda (November 15) would be celebrated as ‘Janjatiya Gaurav Divas’ (Tribal Pride Day).



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and L-G V K Saxena during unveiling of the statue (left) at Baansera Park near Sarai Kale Khan ISBT. Praveen Khanna & PTI

BJP names members of coordination panel ahead of Assembly elections

New Delhi: The Delhi BJP Friday named its 23-member state election coordination committee for the Assembly polls due in February next year. The panel, headed by state BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, will have Union Minister of State and East Delhi MP Harsh Malhotra as its convener, the party said. BJP national general secretary Dushyant Gautam, North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari and senior leader Arvinder Singh Lovely will be co-conveners of the committee, it added. Other members include former Union minister Harsh Vardhan and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Vijender Gupta. PTI

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Veer Singh Dhingan with AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Friday. Praveen Khanna

As Cong’s ex-Seemapuri MLA joins AAP, ruling party also sees defection

SAMAN HUSAIN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

AHEAD OF Delhi elections, three-time Congress MLA from Seemapuri and Dalit leader Veer Singh Dhingan joined AAP in the presence of party chief Arvind Kejriwal on Friday. Soon after, the Delhi Congress announced that AAP’s former Seelampur MLA, Haji Mohammad Ishraq Khan, has joined its ranks along with his supporters.

This exchange comes on the heels of the recent defection of Congress stalwart Chaudhary Mateen Ahmed, who held significant influence in Seelampur, to AAP. Also, Rajendra Pal Gautam, former social welfare minister and Seemapuri MLA, had recently shifted to Congress from AAP.

Welcoming Dhingan, Kejriwal introduced him as the “next MLA from Seemapuri”.

“Today is a day of great joy as Veer Singh Dhingan joins the AAP. A towering figure in Delhi politics, he has dedicated many years to public service and social work. His presence will greatly strengthen the AAP, especially in our mission to uplift the Dalit

community... In Seemapuri, he has done outstanding work for the people, who still hold him in high regard. We are proud to welcome the future MLA of Seemapuri into our party,” he added.

Dhingnan had previously chaired the Delhi Khadi and Village Industries Board and the SC/ST Board.

He said, “I bring with me a long political career and extensive experience. However, the growing exploitation of the people, neglect of Delhi’s residents, and rising corruption in parties like Congress and BJP, have deeply hurt me.”

In a swift counter-move, Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav welcomed Haji Mohammad Ishraq Khan, the former AAP MLA and former chairperson of the Haj Committee, into the Congress.

Khan said, “I was motivated to join the Congress as it is the only party that protects the interest and welfare of the people, unlike the AAP and BJP. I will work as a devoted soldier of the Congress to uplift the lives of the people of Seelampur and the poor.”

Flight landing tests deferred at Noida airport, DGCA approval likely by Nov-end

NEETIKA JHA
NOIDA, NOVEMBER 15

THE LANDING test of aircraft, previously scheduled to commence on Friday at the Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) in Uttar Pradesh’s Jewar, is now likely to take place in the last week of November.

“The trial will happen in the last week of November. We have no further information as of now,” said a senior NIAL official.

Another official pointed out that the approvals for the runway, Instrument Landing System (ILS), and calibration flight have already been granted by the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). “We will conduct a one-

day trial and the data will be submitted to the DGCA now as part of the application process,” the official said.

Earlier this month, NIAL Chief Executive Officer Arun Veer Singh had told The Indian Express that Jewar airport was all set for the second stage of trial operations starting November 15. “In the second stage, flights of Akasa, Indigo and most probably Air India will take off and land daily until December 15,” Singh had said.

He had added that the testing process is expected to continue for a month. “This data will be uploaded on December 20 on the DGCA website. We will apply for the aerodrome licensing,” he said.

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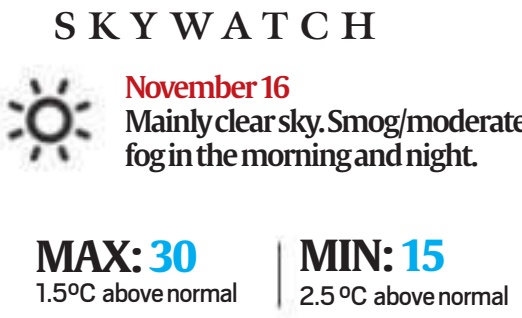
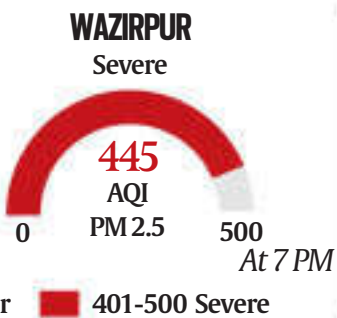
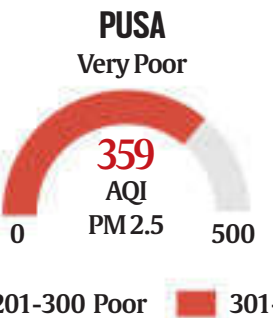
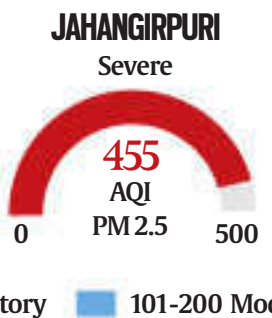
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AQI RECORDED AT 396

Delhi staggers govt office timings as air quality moves to ‘very poor’ category

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

ON A day the GRAP Stage-III emergency measures kicked in to tackle the ‘severe’ air pollution in Delhi, Chief Minister Atishi Friday announced a revision of working hours across government offices to combat pollution and reduce traffic congestion.

“...govt offices across Delhi will be following staggered timings: Municipal Corporation of Delhi: 8:30 am to 5 pm; Central Govt: 9 am to 5:30 pm; Delhi Govt: 10 am to 6:30 pm,” the Delhi CM shared on X.

The Capital, meanwhile, continued to reel under a thick blanket of smog with only a slight dip in the Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded Friday. The AQI was 396 in the ‘very poor’ category as against Thursday’s 424 in the ‘severe’ category. Moderate to shallow fog conditions prevailed over Delhi as the visibility was 400 m at Safdarjung and 500 m at Palam in the morning and evening hours, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The temperatures remained two degrees above normal on Friday with the minimum at 15.6 degrees Celsius and the maximum at 30.5 degrees Celsius.

With stringent restrictions kicking in, officials also assured a strict implementation of GRAP-III measures. Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai, who held a high-level meeting with key departments Friday, announced the decision to introduce 106 shuttle bus services by DTC to boost public transport. “These buses will run 1,844 trips, with 40 bus services specifically for government employees... The shuttle services will connect various colonies, including Dwarka, Nehru Place, and CGO Complex, and will serve offices in areas such as Badarpur, Janakpuri, and Paharganj,” he said, adding that the Metro train will run 60 additional trips.

The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) forecasts ‘very poor’ air quality for subsequent six days. According to IITM’s Decision Support System data, vehicular pollution was the topmost domestic contributor at 13 per cent. The stubble-burning contribution was at 33 per cent Thursday, as per the data.



Dense smog in New Delhi on Friday. Praveen Khanna

‘POLLUTION BREAKS’ BECOMING A NORM

Need long-term policies, not knee-jerk responses, say pvt school principals

SOPHIYAMATHEW
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

TWEAKED LESSON plans, limited outdoor activities, advisory on wearing masks, orientation for parents and training for teachers — this is what pollution means for schools in the Capital.

Although there is common consensus among educators and principals in the city that by now they are accustomed to the perennial crisis, nonetheless, the pollution-induced restrictions and health issues, in addition to online classes, are still a nightmare for the student-teacher community. With GRAP Stage-III kicking in Friday, and classes for students up to grade V moving online, *The Indian Express* speaks with principals and educators of private schools in Delhi.

Alka Kapur, principal, Modern Public School Shalimar Bagh

“There is a clear lack of public awareness and the issue is not taken seriously even by senior students. Even with an over-polluted capital, people are ignorant when it comes to community activi-



Pollution-induced restrictions, in addition to online classes, are still a nightmare for the student-teacher community. File

ties... I am surprised to see schoolchildren going on processions. We are talking about the closure of schools, but firecrackers are being burst openly. The government should take proactive measures, without which this will continue to spiral out of control every year.” “Last night, I was feeling choked, my eyes were burning. I could not sleep. My children are abroad because Delhi has become unlivable... With schools closed due to pollution, education has been hit as remaining offline days are so low. We have made a mockery out of education.”

Pallavi Sharma, principal, Mamta Modern School

“It has become a joke. There are summer holidays, winter holidays, autumn break, Dussehra break, and now we have pollution break. We need to ensure that learning doesn’t stop. With children below five, parents need to sit with them. For seniors, this being the time for Board exam preparations... However, like every year, these are also expected to go online.”

Ameeta Mulla Wattal, chairperson of DLF Foundation Schools

“We (educators) have known the issue of pollution since 2001... So, it is not new... and

with the knee-jerk reactions every year, I don’t expect the issue to stop at least in the next five years. The governments still do not really understand the immediacy of the problem. India does not live in air-purified classrooms. India lives in small towns; it lives in clusters. We cannot expect government schools to come up with the same responses as private ones.”

Y P Purang, chairperson, Delhi International School

“Even if the classes are being switched to online, children still will remain outside. These (government) actions are an eye-wash. The children tend to ultimately be outside playing... There needs to be a permanent solution against pollution. Where are the dust-mitigation measures taking place? I don’t see anything concrete... The biggest downside of online classes is the social impact it has on children. After Covid-19, it took time for the children to go back to being socially adaptable. A failure to combat the crisis is impacting their future.”

MAYORAL POLLS

How cross-voting resulted in razor-thin margin for AAP

SAMAN HUSAIN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THOUGH THE AAP managed to secure the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Mayor seat on Thursday with Dev Nagar councillor Mahesh Khichi winning by just three votes, the contest exposed the rift within the party as eight of its votes shifted to the BJP.

With the Delhi Assembly elections scheduled to be held early next year, the razor-thin win has set the stage for the BJP to capitalise on the fissures within the AAP.

On Thursday, AAP, which will be battling a decade-long anti-incumbency in the Delhi elections, was caught in an intense battle to defend its turf and managed to scrape through with a nail-biting margin.

A total of 265 votes were cast, with AAP receiving 133 and BJP 130; two votes were declared invalid. Currently, AAP has 128 MCD councillors, with two councillors who recently left Congress and joined the party boosting its numbers from 126. It also enjoys the support of an Independent councillor. The BJP has 114 councillors and the Congress just seven.

Apart from the MCD councillors, the mayoral election process also includes votes from seven BJP Lok Sabha MPs, three AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, and 14 MLAs nominated by the Delhi Assembly Speaker (13 from AAP and one from BJP). Rajya Sabha MP Swati Malavi did not turn up to vote.

The BJP was projected to get 122 votes and the AAP 143. However, due to cross-voting, AAP received at least 10 fewer votes than expected.



A staff displays an empty ballot box ahead of the mayoral polls on Thursday. Tashi Tobgyal

“We were already in a minority, so we do not consider this a battle we lost. Winning this election was not our target; our only target was a Dalit mayor. When the councillors are fed up, their mood changes towards the party, leading to this kind of cross-voting,” Raja Iqbal Singh, BJP’s Leader of Opposition, said.

Of the three-vote margin that AAP received, two votes swung in their favour after Congress councillors Shagufta Chaudhary shifted to support AAP a few days before the elections and Sabila Begum on the day of the election itself. Both Chaudhary and Begum left Congress along with their spouses, expecting Assembly tickets from AAP.

Chaudhary earlier confirmed that either her husband Zubair Chaudhary or her father-in-law, five-time MLA Chaudhary Mateen Ahmed, would be the new AAP candidate for the Seelampur seat. AAP sources said that many of their councillors are also expecting tickets to contest the upcoming Assembly elections from their strongholds.

Asked about the cross-voting

after he bagged the mayor’s seat, Khichi said, “A victory is a victory; it does not matter if it is by a single vote or three votes. Our councillors are not swaying away from the party. Small disagreements exist in all parties. Our priority now is to fix the issues being faced in Delhi before the elections and continue the good work once the elections conclude.”

The ward committee elections in September also saw significant cross-voting with some AAP councillors casting their votes in BJP’s favour. In the South Zone, where AAP had 16 councillors against BJP’s six, a draw of lots was held to determine the chairman after five AAP councillors voted for the BJP, leading to an 11-11 tie.

Since former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal’s arrest in the excise policy case, at least 10 councillors have defected from AAP — two before the Lok Sabha polls, five in August, and three more in September. However, two councillors returned to the party soon after. Others did not formally leave but signalled their exit by filing nominations for the ward committee elections as BJP candidates.



The first six-coach train for Delhi Metro’s Phase-IV expansion arrives at Mukundpur depot, Friday. PTI

First train for Metro Phase 4 arrives

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE DELHI Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) marked a significant milestone Friday as the first six-coach train for Phase-4 operations arrived in the Capital.

“The train is stationed at Mukundpur depot where it will undergo a number of tests required for its statutory certification for revenue service as a part of established rules and protocols,” said DMRC Principal Executive Director of Corporate Communications, Anuj Dayal. The train set, manufactured by Alstom at its facility in Sricity near Chennai, was inaugurated on September 23.

Under the contract, DMRC will receive a total of 312 coaches, or 52 train sets, to run on three priority corridors — Majlis Park to Maujpur (Pink Line extension), Janakpuri West to RK Ashram Marg (Magenta Line extension), and Tughlakabad to Delhi

Aerocity (Golden Line) — as part of the Phase-4 operations.

Once operational, the Janakpuri West–RK Ashram Marg extension will receive 144 new coaches (24 trains), the Mukundpur–Maujpur extension will get 90 coaches (15 trains), and the Aerocity–Tughlakabad corridor 78 coaches (13 trains). All train sets will be delivered to Delhi in various phases over the coming months.

The new trains are designed for speeds of up to 95 km/h and operational speeds of 85 km/h, equipped with Grade of Automation (GOA) 4 for driverless operations.

The Phase-4 expansion comprises 86 km of new lines across five corridors, including the under-construction Janakpuri West–RK Ashram Marg, Majlis Park–Maujpur and Aerocity–Tughlakabad. Two additional corridors, Lajpat Nagar–Saket-G Block and Indraprastha–Inderlok are in pre-tendering stages.

Applications pending, impounded old vehicles not to be dismantled until November 29, says transport dept

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE SCRAPPING Cell of the Delhi Transport Department has recently asked all registered vehicle scrapping facilities (RVSFs) to not dismantle impounded end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) till November 29.

The reason: Several applications are pending from vehicle owners seeking release of their overaged vehicles that have been impounded. To curb pollution, diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years are not allowed to ply in Delhi-NCR.

An order issued by the cell on Monday stated: “All registered scrapping agencies associated with the Transport department... for the enforcement drive... are di-

rected not to start scrapping activity of impounded vehicles up to November 29... in respect of applicants whose applications are still pending with the department.”

The department has also directed the Scrapping Cell to share the list of pending applications with the RVSFs.

While Principal Secretary-cum-Commissioner (Transport) Prashant Goyal did not reply to queries, Special Commissioner (Transport) Sachin Shinde said, “The applications for release of ELVs need to be decided as per standard operating procedure.”

According to the guidelines regarding handling of ELVs, a vehicle owner has to submit an application seeking provisional release of his vehicle within three weeks of it being impounded. The transport department has to decide

whether to release the vehicle within a week of receiving the application.

If the department allows the application, it will issue a release order after taking an undertaking from the owner that the vehicle will not be plied or parked in a public place and that it will be parked in private parking. If the owner does not claim his vehicle three weeks after its release order is issued, the RVSFs can scrap it.

The guidelines — issued in February — also state that the department has to develop an online portal to facilitate the process between enforcement agencies, RVSFs and vehicle owners.

However, the enforcement drive was launched on October 11, before the portal was developed. The portal went live on October 21, allowing only owners to sub-

mit applications seeking release of vehicles.

“The department had to develop the portal to facilitate the process... but we have no access to it. It is not fully developed... As per guidelines, the scrapping agencies can scrap vehicles if not claimed in three weeks. But how are we supposed to know which vehicle has been released and which has not,” asked Vikram Bakshi, Director of Pineview Technology Limited, a RVSF registered with the department.

He added, “Now, the department has stopped us from scrapping vehicles. Keeping vehicles in a pit also creates pollution and is a waste of our resources... This is not only a business loss for us but vehicle owners also have to pay... custody charge/parking fees till their vehicle is parked in our unit.

The charges double after seven days of a vehicle being impounded.”

Besides parking charges, the owner also has to pay a penalty of Rs 10,000 for a car and Rs 5,000 for a two-wheeler to get it released.

“...the portal is new, so there is huge pendency,” a senior department official said.

Meanwhile, the RVSFs are planning to go on a strike from Monday over the order and other issues. So far, 3,000 overaged vehicles have been impounded in the enforcement drive, which is still continuing. Further, the department has received about 485 applications from owners whose vehicles have been impounded in the drive. Release orders have been issued for over 100 vehicles, said officials.

Construction near Mahipalpur causes traffic nightmare on Delhi-Gurgaon highway

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- Mehrauli — Gurgaon Road via Aya Nagar border
- Old Gurgaon Road — Kapashera — Samalkha Gaon
- Gurgaon-Dwarka Expressway — Yashobhoomi — Dwarka Sector 23 crossing — Janki Chowk — Dwarka Sector 6/7 crossing — Sector 1 crossing then take right for Palam flyover-Dhaura Kuan

- Dabri — Gurgaon Road — Dwarka Flyover — Dwarka Road — Parade Road
- Gurgaon — Dwarka Expressway — Yashobhoomi — Mahipalpur — Dhaura Kuan

Delhi Traffic Police has asked commuters going to work, the airport, or hospitals to take the Delhi Metro and plan their journey in advance to reach on time.



Traffic at the Mahipalpur Airport Road on Tuesday. Abhinav Saha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

FOR TWO months now, travelling to Gurgaon has been a daily nightmare for lakhs of commuters heading into the Millennium City via the Mahipalpur flyover owing to construction of a portion of the Dwarka Expressway.

In September, the service road on NH-48 from Dwarka Link Road merging point to the Mahipalpur petrol pump was closed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to wrap up work, leading to bumper-to-

bumper traffic during the morning and evening rush hours.

If one starts from Vasant Vihar near Rangpuri, it takes almost 25-30 minutes to reach Shiv Murti Marg on NH-48 — less than a kilometre long.

On Tuesday, *The Indian Express* travelled towards Gurgaon via the Ring Road from Moti Bagh via Shankar Vihar and Vasant Vihar. Traffic was normal till Shani Mandir but the roads were jammed starting from Vasant Vihar especially when one enters the Gurgaon-Delhi expressway and goes towards Mahipalpur flyover.

There is traffic on the elevated

corridor as well as the road below it. Both stretches merge at Mahipalpur, near the Tata Telco road. Here, construction of an underpass on the left side, providing a U-turn option for Delhi or IGI Airport, is underway.

“Traffic movement on this section is impacted due to the ongoing construction of underpasses which will link the NH-48 and Dwarka Expressway... During non-peak hours, traffic movement slows down. In the morning and evening peak hours from 7.30 am to 11 am and 6 pm to 10 pm, it affects the entire stretch causing a 30-minute jam,” said a traffic police officer

deployed on the route.

Once the underpass is constructed, travelling on this stretch will be very smooth as the underpass will provide a direct link to the Airport for those coming from Gurgaon and they don’t have to come till Mahipalpur Chowk, said Traffic Police.

Additional CP (Traffic) Dinesh K Gupta said, “The service lane at Rajokri has been closed due to construction work on NH-48 due to which the entire load has shifted to the main road. Work will go on for two more months. We have deployed extra personnel to manually manage vehicles.” Further, he said traffic police

are removing encroachments near South Campus and Dhaura Kuan to ease traffic flow.

Earlier, the Delhi Police issued an advisory asking people to take alternative routes to reach Mahipalpur, Vasant Kunj, IGI Airport and Dhaura Kuan, as the service road on NH-48, from the NSG office to Mahipalpur petrol pump, has been closed.

“We have noticed 20-25 minute traffic jams on this stretch as you ride down from the Rajokri flyover. We hope construction work is completed on time without any delay,” said senior Delhi government officer O P Mishra.

Resource-spending gap 42% in urban local bodies, 37% staff crunch: CAG

DAMININATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

FLAGGING CONCERNS over the fiscal and overall health of urban local bodies, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has found that the city self-governments in 18 states that cater to 241-million residents are facing 42% gap between their resources and expenditure and only 29% of their expenditure goes towards programmatic and development work.

The CAG found that 31 years after the 74th Constitutional Amendment came into effect in 1993 with the aim to empower urban local bodies, these 18 states were yet to fully implement the law in spirit. On Monday, the CAG released a compendium of audit reports into the implementation of the 74th amendment in 18 states.

The compendium covered 393 urban local self-governments across 18 states — Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura and Uttarakhand. The CAG found that on average, 32% of the revenue of the urban bodies was their own, with the rest coming from the Union and state governments. The urban local bodies were able to realise 56% of their property tax demand, it said. Only 29% of the current expenditure of the urban local bodies was directed towards programmatic and development work and there was an average vacancy of 37% against the sanctioned staff strength, it pointed out. On the other hand, urban bodies of 16 states had limited or no power over recruitment.

As per the 74th

Amendment, states were meant to devolve 18 functions, including urban planning, regulation of land-use and construction, water supply, planning for economic and social development and public health, to the urban local bodies. The CAG found that on average, 17 out of the 18 functions had been devolved, while nine states — Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Punjab and Tripura — had devolved all 18 functions.

“Urban planning and fire services are the least devolved functions by law,” the CAG compendium said.

The CAG said that the states had shown weak compliance with the “in-spirit reading” of the 74th Amendment. Only four of the functions devolved to urban local bodies were with “complete autonomy”. The CAG recommended that states involve urban local bodies in critical functions like planning.

“Considering that 50 per cent of India will be residing in cities by 2050, robust ULGs are pertinent, for they are critical players in delivering good quality of life to their citizens. In this context, it need not be emphasised that State governments work towards facilitating laws, policies, processes, institutions and institutional mechanisms to have robust ULGs and thereby have economically, environmentally and democratically vibrant cities,” the CAG said.

Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO of Bengaluru-based non-profit Janaagraha, which worked on the compendium with CAG, said: “Empowering urban local governments needs to be an important national priority for India, and well-meaning and like-minded stakeholders across government, civil society, and academia need to come together to accomplish the same.”

Candidate who slapped SDM sent to judicial custody

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR, NOVEMBER 15

THE SITUATION in Rajasthan's violence-hit Tonk district was stable on Friday, a day after the arrest of Independent candidate for the Deoli-Uniara Assembly bypoll Naresh Meena who was sent to judicial custody for a fortnight.

Meena, a Congress rebel who slapped a sub-divisional magistrate on election duty outside a polling booth on November 13, was arrested on Thursday following high drama and escalating violence in which a mob assaulted a PTI reporter and video camer-

aperson and burnt their camera.

The Congress' Tonk MLA and senior leader Sachin Pilot blamed the BJP government in Rajasthan for the violence and alleged the "state machinery was deployed to attack people".

Police produced Meena before a court in Niwai of Tonk district virtually, citing law-and-order issues. It was expected that he would be brought before the court physically. However, the plan was changed as Meena's supporters had gathered at different locations and threatened to block the Jaipur-Kota Highway.

"The court gave directions to produce Naresh Meena through

video conference after police cited law-and-order issues. During the hearing, the court sent Meena to judicial custody for 14 days," the Independent candidate's counsel Sitaram Sharma

told PTI.

According to police, four cases, including for disrupting public work and damaging public property, were registered against Naresh Meena.

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Prevent Mosquito breeding

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Always cover the bucket, water tank, other utensils properly



Don't throw broken utensils, bottles, tins, tyres and coconut shells or disposables in the open



Prevent Mosquito bites

Wear full sleeves clothes and use mosquito repellants



Use mosquito net at home & hospitals regularly during fever

Symptoms of Dengue



High Fever



Severe pain behind the eyes that increases with eye movements



Headache, muscle and joint pain



Stomachache



Nausea and vomiting



Rashes on body

Incase of above symptoms contact your nearest hospital or health facility

Diagnosis and Treatment of Dengue is available Free of Cost in all Government Hospital and Health Facilities.

**National Vector Borne Diseases Control Program**
Directorate General of Health Services, Delhi Government







Pushkar Singh Dhami
Chief Minister of Uttarakhand

I am delighted to welcome authors, poets, diplomats, scholars, parliamentarians and heads of knowledge organisations to the eighth edition of VoW I Shabdavali.



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6 GOVT & POLITICS



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BEAR(D) IN MIND

A HOT topic in political circles of Jharkhand, where Assembly elections are ongoing, is Chief Minister Hemant Soren's "beard look" that resembles a younger Shibu Soren. Hemant, who used to be clean-shaven before his arrest in a money laundering case in January this year, walked out on bail five months later with a beard as thick as his father's. As this new look grabbed people's attention, Hemant decided to continue with it in the elections. Now when he is campaigning across the state, his beard is being noticed not just by the public but also Opposition leaders, who often try to dismiss it as a "copy cat look". Hemant is contesting from Barhait seat, which will go to polls on November 20. Whether or not the beard will draw more voters will be known only on the results day on November 23.

DIVIDED ON UNITY CALL

There seems to be a new slogan war within the BJP. While a section of the party is projecting the slogan 'Batenge toh katenge' — raised by UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath calling for unity — citing it as one of the reasons for the BJP's stunning performance in Haryana, another section is banking on 'Ek hain toh safe hain', raised recently by PM Narendra Modi in Maharashtra. BJP leaders like Pankaja Munde and Ashok Chavan have already rejected 'Batenge toh Katenge' slogan as "inappropriate". However, the real crisis is for the party's talking heads, who have been flaunting both the slogans alternatively, careful not to pick sides in their public appearances. There are even suggestions that they can design dresses or caps projecting the slogans on two sides.

BACK & FORTH

Former Intelligence Bureau special director and incumbent CRPF DG Anish Dayal Singh was set to become the next chairman of the National Technical Research Organisation. However, the file recommending his appointment was sent back by the PMO recently. This has got tongues wagging in power corridors of a possible rift within the government. Senior officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs deny this. However, no one appears to have an explanation as to why the file was sent back. Due to retire next month, Singh would have got four more years of service had he been appointed to the post.

Ajit Pawar will take time to understand public mood: Fadnavis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NAGPUR, NOVEMBER 15

DEPUTY CM Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said NCP president Ajit Pawar, who has criticised Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath's "batenge to katenge" remark, has failed to understand the sentiments of people because of his long association with secular ideologies in the past.

In an interview to a private channel, Fadnavis said, "Deputy CM Ajit Pawar stayed with such ideologies which are secular and anti-Hindu for very long. There is no real secularism amongst those who call themselves secularist. He has had a long association with those for whom secularism meant anti-Hindutva. It will take some time for him to understand the mood of the public."

Adityanath, during campaigning in Maharashtra, had remarked, "Batenge to katenge (If we are divided we will get destroyed)."

The remark has upset alliance partner NCP led by Pawar, who openly admonished and distanced his party from the hard-line Hindutva advocated by the right-wing BJP. "There was no question of supporting such a remark. It will not work in Maharashtra. It may work in UP, Jharkhand or other states," Pawar had said.

Earlier, the remark also invited criticism from BJP's national secretary and MLC Pankaja Munde. She said, "I don't endorse such statements." Similar sentiments were expressed by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Chavan, who criticised the remark.

Responding to the differences within BJP over the remark, Fadnavis said, "Those who are raising objections have not understood the meaning of the remarks. Or possibly they may have wanted to say something and it was misunderstood."

LAUNCHES TRIBAL WELFARE PROJECTS WORTH ₹6,600 CR

Tribals' role in freedom ignored to give credit to one family: PM

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, NOVEMBER 15

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Friday accused former Congress governments of undermining the contributions of tribal leaders to the freedom movement so that "only one party and one family could get away with the credit".

Addressing a function on the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda in Jamui, the PM said the NDA government has been running schemes worth ₹ 1.25 lakh crore for tribal welfare across the country. He also laid the foundation stone of tribal welfare projects worth ₹6,600 crore at the event, which was attended by the families of tribal heroes Birsa Munda, Sido Murmu and Kanhu Murmu, besides veteran tribal leader from Jharkhand, Karia Munda.

Without taking the names of Congress and the Nehru-Gandhi family, he said: "We got Independence not just because of one party or one family. Tribal people greatly contributed towards the country's freedom... The previous governments deliberately tried to suppress this fact so that all credit was given to one party and one family."

TMC councillor attacked in Kolkata, 1 held

Kolkata: TMC councillor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) ward no 108 Sushanta Ghosh had a close shave on Friday evening when two persons tried to fire at him from a close range, a senior police officer said.

No bullet was released when one of the two, who came on a two-wheeler, pulled the trigger of a handgun.

One of the attackers, who was apprehended by locals, was arrested by police, he said. "The incident happened around 8.10 pm when 2 men arrived in a two-wheeler at Kasba. One of them got down and tried to fire at him. But no bullet was released from the handgun may be due to some mechanical error," the officer said.**PTI**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDRAPUR, YAVATMAL, HINGOLI, NOVEMBER 15

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Friday asserted Prime Minister Narendra Modi was determined to amend the Waqf Act despite resistance from key opposition leaders like Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar.

Addressing three election rallies in Maharashtra during the day in support of Mahayuti candidates, he declared the Modi government will eliminate Naxalism from Chhattisgarh by March 31, 2026, and dared Congress MP Rahul Gandhi to publicly laud Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar



PM Narendra Modi and Bihar CM Nitish Kumar in Bihar's Jamui on Friday. **PTI**

"What was the Santhal rebellion? What was Kol Kranti? The brave Bheels also fought for freedom," the PM said, naming several tribal heroes from across the country. Modi also launched a silver coin and a postal ticket after Birsa Munda. He said: "The tribals played a key role in transition of Prince Ram into Bhagwan Ram."

Talking about the schemes launched for tribals by his government, the PM said: "The Centre has sanctioned ₹1.5 lakh new homes for tribals. About ₹11,000 families will get their pucca homes (constructed by the government) today."

Modi thanked Bihar CM Nitish Kumar for offering "full support" when "a tribal woman"

Droupadi Murmu was made the presidential candidate by the BJP-led NDA.

"It was Droupadi Murmu, who as then Jharkhand Governor, had raised concerns about the poorest of the poor among tribals. Now, we have ₹24,000 crore-worth PM-JANMAN for them," said the PM.

He said there were times when good officers would consider transfer to tribal districts as "shunting postings". "Now, several energetic officers have been working in tribal areas," he said, adding that schemes for sanitation, employment generation and potable water worth ₹80,000 crore were meant for about 5,000 tribal villages.



JANJATIYA DIVAS

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and others celebrate Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, at Parliament House on Friday. **ANI**

PM firm on amending Waqf Act, says Shah



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Chandrapur, Friday.

and Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray.

He emphasised that the Centre will push through amendments in the Waqf Act, 1995, despite opposition from INDIA bloc parties.

"Modi ji wants to change the Waqf Board law, but Uddhav ji, Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule

are opposing it. Uddhav ji, listen carefully, you all can protest as much as you want, but Modi ji will amend the Waqf Act," he said at a rally at Umarkhed in Yavatmal district.

At the rally, Shah drew on the Mahabharat and said there are two camps in the November 20 polls — one of 'Pandavas' represented by the BJP-led Mahayuti and the other of 'Kauravas' represented by the MVA.

"Uddhav Thackeray claims that his Shiv Sena is the real one. Can the real Shiv Sena go against renaming Aurangabad to Sambhajinagar? Can the real Shiv Sena go against renaming Ahmednagar to Ahilyanagar? The real Shiv Sena stands with the BJP," Shah insisted. Shiv Sena headed by CM Eknath Shinde is aligned with the BJP.

PM's IAF plane suffers snag, he leaves Deoghar in another aircraft

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RANCHI, NOVEMBER 15

PM NARENDRA Modi, who was stranded in Jharkhand's Deoghar airport for nearly two hours on Friday after his special IAF aircraft developed a snag, flew back to Delhi in another plane, officials said. Modi was supposed to return to New Delhi on the IAF plane after addressing a rally in Bihar's Jamui, they said.

The PM visited Jamui to attend a function marking the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda, celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas.

"PM Modi left for Delhi from Deoghar in another special aircraft after his IAF plane developed a technical snag. The aircraft could not be rectified on time. PM had to wait for more than two hours," Deoghar Deputy Commissioner Vishal Sagar told **PTI**. While Modi waited for the issue to be resolved, the region's airspace was declared a "no-flying zone".



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in Godda on Friday. **ANI**

PM serving interests of billionaires at the cost of poor: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MAHAGAMA, BERMO, NOV 15

CONGRESS LEADER Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of serving the interests of billionaires at the expense of the country's poor.

Gandhi, who addressed two election rallies in Jharkhand during the day, also charged Modi with seeking to destroy the Constitution which is the "soul of the country".

"PM Modi says Rahul is flashing a red book. Its content is important, not the colour. Had you read it, you would not have been spreading hatred and dividing society," Gandhi said in Godda district.

Addressing another rally at Bermo in Bokaro district, Gandhi accused Modi of seeking to destroy the Constitution which is the "soul of the country".

Maintaining that he was not "afraid" of Modi or "his 56-inch chest", Gandhi said: "He is a puppet of billionaires." He accused the PM of giving lessons to people during the day, while enjoying the weddings of industrialists at night.

Gandhi claimed that the Uddhav Thackeray-led government in Maharashtra was toppled to grab land. He alleged that Modi was trying to hand over land worth ₹1 lakh crore in

CONG TO EC: ENSURE LEVEL-PLAYING FIELD

New Delhi: Congress wrote to the EC Friday complaining that the election campaign of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was delayed after his helicopter was not allowed to take off at Godda. The party said it was told that "due to the protocol of other leaders in the vicinity, a no-fly zone restriction had been put in place". In a post on X, Congress MP Jairam Ramesh said: "There should be a level-playing field in campaigning. The PM's campaign cannot take precedence over that of all others. Today Rahul Gandhi got delayed in Jharkhand on this account." **ENS**

Dharavi to an industrialist.

The PM worked for the welfare of billionaires in the country and privatised institutions, colleges, industries, hospitals and ports, Gandhi claimed.

"He handed over the country's wealth to 25 capitalists. PM Modi waived ₹16 lakh crore of debt of industrialists but did not do anything for the poor people, farmers and Dalits," he said. Gandhi said that though PM Modi speaks of his respect for the poor, but does not waive the farm loans.

In a first, 2-day global maritime meet in Delhi from Nov 18

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

IN A bid to enhance India's clout in the global merchant shipping sector, the government is hosting a two-day global maritime conference — Sagaramanathan: The Great Oceans Dialogue — in national capital on November 18 and 19.

The conference, the first-ever being held in India, is being co-hosted by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Observer Research Foundation. Representatives from 60-65 countries will take part in the dialogue, said a source in the ministry.

"Despite the fact that we are the most populous nation and also one of the largest economies of the world, our maritime clout has been lower than expected. The dialogue is aimed at garnering the attention of global stakeholders to the fact that India is looking at expanding its role in

global maritime trade and merchant shipping," said an official.

A concept note put out by ORF says, "The country has already contributed about 16% of the global growth in 2023, and it is on the way to becoming the third-largest global economy within the next three years. As India grows, the maritime domain takes on a more critical role in international collaborations on commerce, connectivity, trade, and human well-being. With its growing heft in international relations, India has the opportunity and responsibility to play a more prominent role in maritime governance. This, however, requires deepening our engagement with diverse stakeholders from policy-making ecosystems, helping inform perspectives on India, its ambitions, presence, and interests, and steering conversations on issues of global relevance."

The inaugural remarks will be delivered by Ministry Secretary T K Ramachandran.

Canada minister: Some students appear to have been advised to file asylum claims

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA & DIVYA A
CHANDIGARH, NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

DAYS AFTER terminating its popular fast-track visa programme for international students from 14 countries, including India, Canada's immigration Minister Marc Miller expressed concern over a growing number of international students claiming asylum and said "some students appear to have been advised to file asylum claims soon after their arrival in Canada".

"Canada is dedicated to aiding individuals in need of protection. However, counselling asylum seekers to misrepresent themselves to remain in Canada or seek permanent residence would be

contrary to the objectives of Canada's immigration system," he wrote in a letter to the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants (CICC) President and Chief Executive Officer John Murray Thursday, a copy of which was posted on X on Thursday.

Nearly 14,000 international students in Canada have sought asylum in the first nine months of 2024, setting a record even as the number of new study permits issued during the same period significantly fell.

Data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) shows that the top source countries for these asylum claims include India, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. India is Canada's largest source country of foreign students with

an estimated 4.27 lakh Indian students studying there in 2023.

The jump in the number of asylum seekers from 13,000 in August-end to 14,000 in September-end as per statistics, coincides with the recent restrictions and caps imposed by the Canadian government on international students.

Miller attributed the surge in asylum applications partly to false claims allegedly encouraged by unscrupulous immigration consultants. Citing anecdotal evidence from departmental officials, he noted that conditions in the source countries have not changed significantly, suggesting external advice as a key driver.

"Some students appear to have been advised to file asylum claims soon after their arrival in Canada," Miller said. "We often

see these claims filed within the first year, sometimes for less valid reasons, such as lowering tuition fees to domestic rates. There's opportunism at play, and it's being exploited."

Miller has requested the CICC to investigate licensed consultants who might be improperly advising international students to pursue asylum claims.

As per IRCC data, Canadian news outlet *The Globe and Mail* reported that international students filed 13,660 asylum claims between January 1 and September 30, 2024, surpassing around 12,000 claims made through 2023 but less than 1,810 claims in 2018. With three months of data yet to be tallied, the numbers in 2024 are expected to rise.

FULL REPORT
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Energy Efficient Uttarakhand



“The Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023 is evidence of our dedication to a sustainable and profitable tomorrow. By harnessing the power of solar energy, we strive to not only secure our energy requirements but also encourage economic development and create multiple livelihood prospects, especially for the youth and women. Our vision is to make Uttarakhand a forerunner in clean energy, assuring a brighter, greener future for all.”

- Pushkar Singh Dhami,
Chief Minister of Uttarakhand

Ensclosed in the Himalayan belt of northern India, Uttarakhand is recognized for its natural magnificence, rich biodiversity, and spiritual value. However, the state encounters substantial perils from global warming and climate change. Acknowledging the pressing necessity to transition to cleaner energy, the Uttarakhand government has introduced the Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023. This policy strives to lessen dependence on fossil fuels, foster renewable energy, and assure energy security and inclusive economic development.

Vision

The vision of the Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023 is to support the clean energy transition by mainstreaming solar energy. The policy aims to accelerate solar energy deployment via distributed solar systems, ingenious business models, and increased adoption of solar applications

Pioneering a clean energy future

Under the guidance of PM Narendra Modi and the able leadership of Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami, the state government introduced Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023. This policy strives to lessen dependency on fossil fuels, foster renewable energy, and assure energy security and inclusive economic development

Pics: DIPR, Govt of Uttarakhand



>> Pushkar Singh Dhami, CM, Uttarakhand; R Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary energy; and other dignitaries participating at UREDA event

across different sectors. By leveraging solar energy, the state strives to improve power system stability, encourage rural incomes, enhance the reliability and quality of electricity supply, and create livelihood prospects, especially for youth and women.

Regulatory Framework

The Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023, superseding the Uttarakhand Solar Energy Policy 2013, is developed under the provisions of the Electricity Act of 2003. The policy requires the Uttarakhand State Electricity Regulatory Commission (UERC) and the state government to promote renewable energy, assuring the adoption of cleaner energy forms.

Key Provisions

To achieve the policy targets, several key provisions have been summarised:

Green Tariff

Discoms will create provisions for interested consumers to procure clean electricity from renewable sources at predetermined rates, known

as the 'Green Tariff.' The UERC will introduce economically attractive green tariff rates to encourage early adoption of green energy.

Feed-in-Tariff

The UERC will introduce feed-in tariffs for distributed solar power plants set up by residential, agricultural, government, and institutional consumers to compensate for excess generation injected into the grid.

Metering and Peer-to-Peer Trading

The policy promotes virtual and group net metering, allowing consumers with inadequate rooftop areas to adopt solar. Further, peer-to-peer trading using blockchain technologies will be promoted, allowing consumers to sell power to other grid consumers.

Banking

100% energy banking will be permitted during all 12 months, with energy settlement done monthly. The UERC will determine compensation for banked energy based on peak and off-peak hours.

Open Access

The policy ensures that captive/group-captive solar plants will be exempt from transmission and wheeling charges. Discoms are required to process open-access applications within 21 days.

Implementation Mechanisms

The policy introduces several ingenious mechanisms to encourage solar deployment:

Solar Policy Cell and Single Window Portal

A dedicated Solar Policy Cell will be created by UREDA to streamline the approval process through a single window portal, providing statutory clearances and approvals within 60 days.

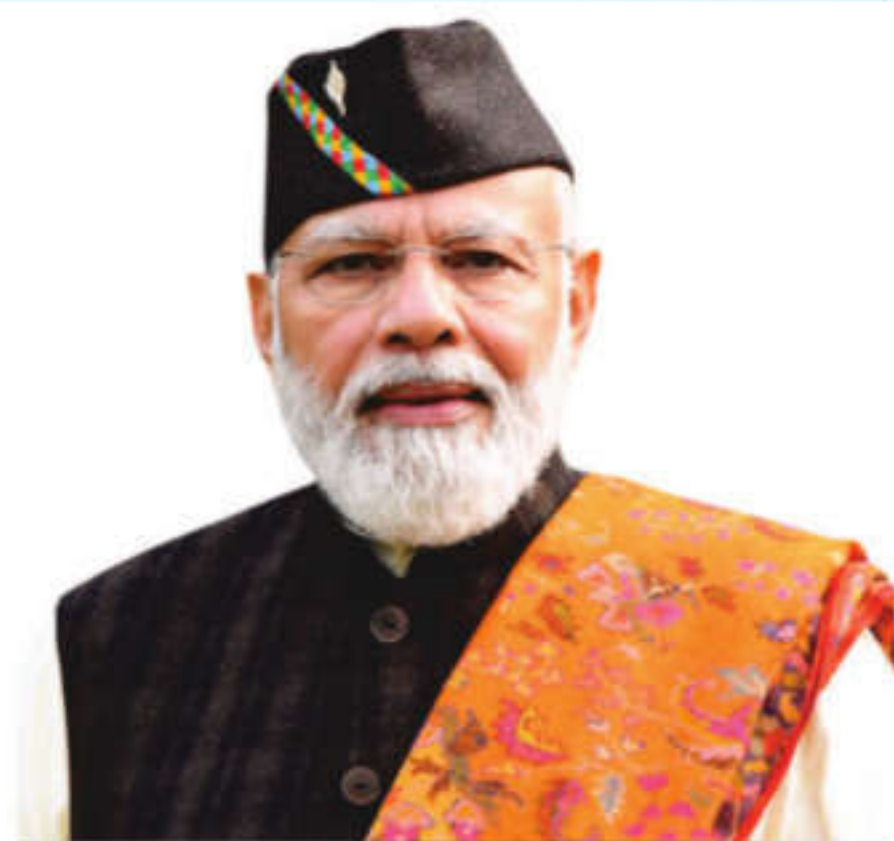
Data Rooms

UREDA will establish data rooms to host information on available land parcels, building details, and rooftop solar potential of government buildings.

OBJECTIVES

The policy summarises several essential objectives to achieve its vision:

- Reach a cumulative capacity of 2500 MW by December 2027 across diversified project portfolios.
- Accelerate solar investment via improved deployment mechanisms, incentives, and business models.
- Provide reliable electricity access to rural consumers in distant places by encouraging solar plus storage solutions.
- Support solar-based livelihood applications and occupation prospects, fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Incorporate tourism into the energy transition with incentives and innovative business models.
- Promote agro-photovoltaics to boost agricultural income.
- Provide training for skill development, focusing on vulnerable communities to create employment through solar project deployment.



“Since 2014, India has increased its solar installation capacity by 30 times. We want to make every household in India a solar power home. From houses to roads, India has moved on the path of energy-efficient lighting. Through all these efforts, green jobs are being created in very large numbers. India of the 21st century is moving ahead with education, skill, research, and innovation.”

-Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister

Payment Security Mechanism

Payment security mechanisms, such as ESCROW accounts or letters of credit, will be created to ensure timely payments to developers selling RE to government departments and Discoms.

Land Banks and Direct Benefits to Local Communities

UREDA will facilitate the setting up of land banks and identify suitable government and private lands for solar power plant installation. The policy mandates that at least 50% of the employment potential during project construction and operation stages be provided to bonafide residents of Uttarakhand, with a preference

for displaced communities.

Manufacturing Incentives

The policy promotes solar manufacturing facilities with incentives such as priority land allotment, electricity duty waivers, stamp duty reimbursements, SGST reimbursement, and customs duty exemptions on inputs required for manufacturing solar modules and battery storage.

The Uttarakhand State Solar Policy 2023 is an exhaustive framework to accelerate the state's transition to renewable energy. By harnessing the potential of solar energy, Uttarakhand strives to attain its sustainability goals, improve energy security, and foster inclusive economy.

Initiating renewable energy endeavours

UREDA's mission involves improving energy access, encouraging sustainability, and promoting financial growth via different schemes

The Uttarakhand Renewable Energy Development Agency (UREDA), operating under the Energy & Renewable Energy Department of the Government of Uttarakhand, has been at the vanguard of propelling the state's renewable energy initiatives. UREDA's mission involves improving energy access, encouraging sustainability, and promoting financial growth via different ingenious programmes and schemes.

Mukhyamantri Saur Swarozgar Yojana (MSSY)

The Mukhyamantri Saur Swarozgar Yojana (MSSY) aims to enhance self-employment and entrepreneurship development through solar energy in Uttarakhand. Launched in March 2023, the scheme expanded its capacity options to include not only 20/25 kW solar power plants but also higher capacity installations of 50, 100, and 200 kW. Exclusively available to permanent residents of Uttarakhand, MSSY has set an ambitious target of establishing a total solar power capacity of 250 MW. Beneficiaries can access all benefits permissible under the MSME framework, with potential monthly incomes reaching up to Rs 1 lakh from these solar plants. In a notable example, 19 solar power plants are being set up in Kukreda, a remote block in Uttarkashi district, under the Chief Minister Solar Self-Employment Scheme. Out of approximately 1,077 projects (192.595 MW) allocated under MSSY, projects totalling 67 MW have been allotted in Tehri district. Additionally, 89 projects (16 MW) have been installed, with 44 of these projects allotted in Tehri.

Solar Rooftops on Government Buildings

UREDA is enhancing the use of government structures for renewable energy generation, setting a target capacity of 60 MW for rooftop solar installations. Currently, 9 MW has been installed across 305 government buildings. In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the state government has sanctioned a budget of 100 crore for the first phase of this initiative and received proposals for an additional 24.5 MW capacity across 1,695 buildings. The installation of solar power plants will promote a green economy along with creating employment opportunities.

PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

The PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana aims to promote the installation of solar power plants in Uttarakhand by providing substantial financial incentives to beneficiaries. In addition to grants from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and the Central Government, the State Government offers matching grants, significantly

enhancing the financial support for solar energy initiatives. For instance, beneficiaries can receive grants of up to Rs 33,000 per kW for solar power plants ranging from 1 to 2 kW, along with additional support for larger capacities. Since the scheme's inception, 25,888 applications have been submitted, resulting in the commissioning of 8,143 solar power plants with a combined capacity of 31.5 MW. Central grants have been disbursed to 2,618 applicants, while UREDA has issued state grants totalling Rs 7.03 crore to 1,384 beneficiaries, representing a capacity of 5.59 MW.

Solar Water Heater Program

UREDA provides a 50% state subsidy for domestic installations and a 30% subsidy for commercial solar water heater systems. With a target of 1.7 lakh liters per day (LPD) and a budget provision of ₹1.5 crore for 2024-25, the program has disbursed subsidies amounting to one crore for installations approx 1.29 lakh LPD.

Micro, Mini & Small Hydropower Projects

UREDA is backing hydropower projects to assure village electrification and grid strengthening.

Presently, 41 hydro projects with a cumulative capacity of 14.65 MW are operational across state, furnishing renewable energy to different rural locales.

A total of six hydro projects in all the four shrines have been established to ensure regular power supply to all Char Dhams and uphill regions.

Solar Streetlight/High Mast Light

This community-centric program concentrates on installing solar street and high mast lights in rural areas, improving safety.

National Biogas Program

In collaboration with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, the Government of India, UREDA is implementing the National Biogas Program to meet rural energy needs. The program offers financial assistance of ₹17,000 for 1 cubic meter biogas plants and ₹22,000 for 2-4 cubic meter plants, promoting sustainable energy solutions in rural areas.

Energy Conservation Program

UREDA's energy conservation efforts include developing model villages to raise public awareness about energy savings. Initiatives such as replacing conventional bulbs, tube lights, and fans with energy-efficient devices in government schools, health centers, and other public buildings are underway.



Leading the charge in energy sector excellence

Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL) is a supreme entity in the energy sector, serving over 2.9 million electricity consumers across Uttarakhand. With an expansive infrastructure that contains more than 375 substations, over 45,000 KM of 11 KV lines, and upwards of 70,000 KM of low-tension lines, UPCL is dedicated to delivering reliable electricity to all parts of the state.

UPCL's mission is to empower the socio-economic growth of Uttarakhand by

enforcing a cutting-edge distribution network and maximizing consumer satisfaction through IT-enabled solutions. Significant accomplishments include a record revenue collection of Rs. 9,880 Crore in FY 2023-24, a substantial decrease in AT&C losses to 14.85%, and securing the 1st position among Himalayan states in the latest Consumer Service Rating of Discom (CSRD) by the REC.

The corporation has adopted technological advances, such as the "Consumer Self-Service" mobile application and the Field Activity Management (FAM) mobile application, to enhance service delivery and operational efficiency. In FY 2023-24, UPCL ensured an impressive average power supply of 23:41 hours per day in

urban areas and 23:28 hours per day in rural areas.

UPCL's dedication to quality and governance is evidenced by its various certifications and awards, including NABL certification for its test laboratories and ISO 9001:2015 certification for its corporate office. These efforts highlight UPCL's dedication to providing reliable electricity and driving Uttarakhand's socio-economic growth.



>> Pushkar Singh Dhami, CM, Uttarakhand, inaugurates RMU works at Uttarkashi

CM Dhami inaugurates RMU works in Uttarkashi

In a significant move towards enhancing power generation capabilities in Uttarakhand, CM Pushkar Singh Dhami inaugurated the Renovation, Modernization, and Upgradation (RMU) works at the Tiloth Power House, operated by Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (UJVNL). This initiative aims to rejuvenate aging power infrastructure and boost electricity output.

The RMU project targets power houses with outdated equipment and diminishing generation capacity. At the Tiloth Power House, extensive repairs and renovations of the existing machinery have been undertaken. This initiative has successfully increased the installed capacity from 90 MW to 94.5 MW, leading to a remarkable surge in annual electricity generation.

Prior to the RMU, the Tiloth Power House produced approximately 397 million units of electricity per year. Post-upgrade, this figure is expected to soar to around 483 million units

reflecting an impressive increase of nearly 22%. Additionally, the availability of machinery has improved from 73.67% to 77.5%, ensuring more reliable power supply. Financially, the RMU project is projected to significantly enhance revenue. Previously generating around Rs 57 crore annually, the Tiloth Power House is now expected to yield approximately Rs 97 crore—a potential increase of Rs 40 crore. This uptick in production and revenue is set to not only bolster the financial health of UJVNL but also contribute positively to the state's economy.

CM Dhami emphasised the importance of such initiatives in strengthening the state's power supply system, asserting that the advancements in infrastructure will ultimately benefit both the corporation and the residents of Uttarakhand. The successful implementation of RMU works at Tiloth Power House marks a significant step forward.



>> Pushkar Singh Dhami, CM, Uttarakhand; R Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary energy; and other dignitaries inaugurating power projects

Transforming Uttarakhand's power supply

The Ministry of Power, Government of India, has established the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) to revolutionize electricity distribution across India. For Uttarakhand, the Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC) is the nodal agency for enforcing this transformative scheme.

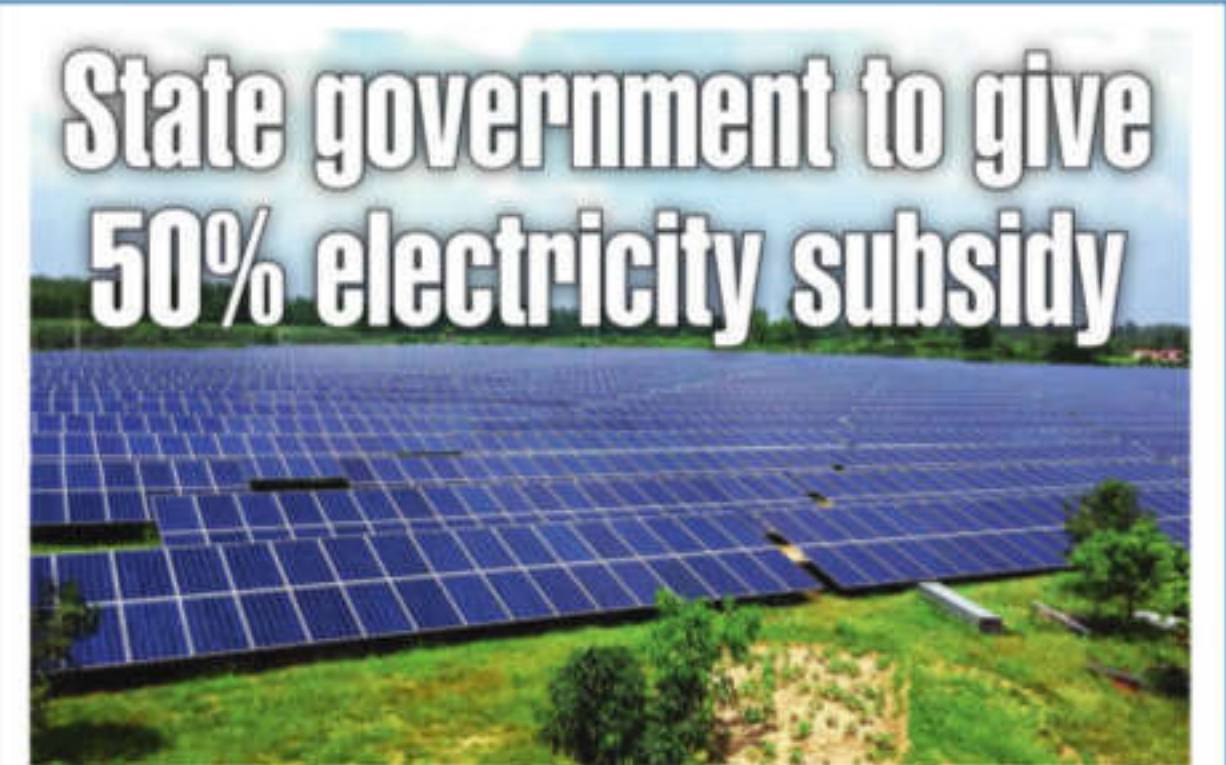
The RDSS seeks to improve the power supply experience for consumers in Uttarakhand with pivotal objectives, including improving quality and reliability, reducing Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses to 12-15% by 2024-25, and eliminating the gap between Average Cost of Supply (ACS) and Average Revenue Realized (ARR) by the same year.

A critical component of the RDSS is the introduction

of prepaid smart metering, which will improve operational efficiency via Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). This technology will automate energy flow measurement and enhance energy accounting.

Uttarakhand's distribution infrastructure will experience extensive upgrades, such as replacing old conductors, installing additional high-tension lines, and deploying Aerial Bundled Cables (ABC) and High Voltage Distribution Systems (HVDS) in high-loss areas.

The scheme also focuses on skill development and capacity building, including training personnel and running consumer awareness programs. With a sanctioned cost of Rs 2,526.17 crore for loss reduction and prepaid smart metering components, the RDSS aims to create a sustainable and efficient power supply system in Uttarakhand.



State government to give 50% electricity subsidy

The Pushkar Singh Dhami-led government in Uttarakhand has prompted a project to furnish a 50% subsidy to consumers using less than 100 units of electricity per month. This scheme is anticipated to cost the state government Rs. 130 crore annually, and aims to benefit over 11 lakh power consumers.

Energy Secretary R Meenakshi Sundaram explained that the estimated expenditure is based on previous electricity bills, with Rs. 260 crore worth of electricity consumed by those using less than 100 units last year. Under the scheme, consumers using more than 100 units will have to pay the full amount.

The subsidy will also extend to consumers in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand, providing ease to users with a power load of up to 1 KW

The subsidy will also extend to consumers in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand, providing ease to users with a power load of up to 1 KW. This initiative, announced by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on his birthday, reflects the government's adherence to lessening the economic burden on low-consumption electricity users in the state.

BRIEFLY

JAMMU & KASHMIR
2 teens driving SUV die in road accident

Srinagar: Two teenage boys died and as many were injured when their carrammed into a stationary truck before hitting a road divider, sparking calls from various quarters, including political parties, for strict action on underage driving in Kashmir. The accident occurred on Thursday at Tenggpora on the Srinagar-Baramulla highway when the teenagers were driving an SUV. CCTV footage of the incident has been widely circulated on social media. The deceased were identified as Hamaad and Aseem Sofi, both 17. Of the two other persons injured, one of them is critical. Politicians, including J&K CM Omar Abdullah, expressed grief over the loss of lives. **PTI**

NEW DELHI
700kg drugs seized off Gujarat coast

New Delhi: In a joint operation, the NCB, Navy, and the anti-terrorist squad of Gujarat Police seized around 700 kg of methamphetamine from a boat off Porbandar coast and held eight people who identified themselves as Iranians, officials said Friday. “This week, in a joint operation carried out by the NCB, Navy, and ATS Gujarat Police, a huge consignment of approximately 700kg of methamphetamine was intercepted in Indian Territorial Waters. During this operation, eight foreign nationals were arrested who claimed to be Iranians,” NCB Deputy Director General (Operations) Gyaneshwar Singh said. **ENS**

MANIPUR
Jawan injured in gunfight near Myanmar border

Imphal: One jawan of the 3 Assam Rifles (AR) suffered a bullet injury in a gunfight with militants, suspected to be valley-based, Friday morning along the Indo-Myanmar border (IMB) in Kamjong district. According to sources, the incident occurred along the Indo-Myanmar border near pillar numbers 85 and 86, around 9 am near Kongkan Thana. Reportedly a handful of militants tried to cross the border when they encountered security forces guarding the border resulting in an exchange of firefight between the two sides. The injured jawan has been identified as Bhoj Ram Sahoo, 45. The casualties on the part of the militants could not be ascertained. **ENS**

JOHNSONT A
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 15

FROM BEING the prosecution’s Witness Number 1 to filing interventions in the courts to prevent the accused from being let off, from staging protests to writing and speaking out — for seven years since her elder sister Gauri Lankesh’s murder, Kavitha Lankesh has fought a long, relentless battle. Kavitha’s efforts suffered a setback recently when a special court in Bengaluru granted bail on October 10 — in the midst of the murder trial — to eight persons arrested in 2018 by an SIT of the Karnataka police for Gauri’s murder. With that, 16 of the 17 arrested in the case have now been granted bail in the case. Of the 16, 11 have walked free so far and five remain in prison on account of being accused in other cases.

Not at WTO, COPs, where do you want to discuss CBAM: India, China confront EU



EXPRESS AT COP29

AMITABH SINHA
BAKU, NOVEMBER 15

CHINA AND India confronted the European Union (EU) once again on Friday on the issue of trade barriers disguised as climate action and warned that unilateral trade measures could be detrimental to multilateral cooperation. China and India, along with other BASIC country partners Brazil and South Africa, have been complaining against the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) introduced by the EU last year. CBAM seeks to impose a tax on a certain class

of goods imported in the EU, if the production of those goods had an emission footprint higher than the emission standards in EU. Ostensibly a step to control emissions, CBAM will have the effect of goods from developing countries like China or India becoming non-competitive in the European markets.

When European countries said that a climate change conference was not the appropriate forum to discuss trade-related issues, China Friday put forward officials who had raised this issue at the recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) meetings. Those officials reminded Europe that they had turned down the discussion at WTO meetings as well.

On the opening day of the COP29 meeting Monday, China, on behalf of the BASIC countries, had moved a proposal to include a discussion on “unilateral restrictive trade measures” — with-

out mentioning CBAM — in the formal agenda of the COP meeting. The EU had strongly opposed the move, and decisions at COP are taken only by consensus. The COP presidency — the host country presides over the conference — had then referred the matter for informal presidential consultations — the first round was held Friday morning.

The BASIC group said CBAM unfairly targeted developing countries. Chinese and Indian negotiators also argued that it violated several provisions of existing international regulations related to both trade and climate change. The EU, however, denied that CBAM was aimed at any particular group of countries or was discriminatory.

The consultations remained inconclusive, and the COP presidency said another round would be convened next week. These consultations are unlikely to result in the issue of trade

measures getting included on the formal agenda — the original demand of the BASIC countries — since the agenda once adopted at the start of the meeting is not altered. But the BASIC countries are keen to keep the issue alive.

Meanwhile, India once again insisted that the attempts by the developed countries to evade their responsibilities on climate finance would not be acceptable to the developing nations.

India was, in particular, referring to proposals about a bulk of climate finance flows in the coming years would be in the form of investments.

COP29 is hoping to deliver a comprehensive agreement on finance to enable greater flows of money for climate action. Called the New Cumulative Quantitative Goal on climate finance (NCQG), the expected agreement is supposed to mobilise at least a trillion dollars every year for climate action, through various sources. But

India said this entire amount must be raised by developed countries to help the developing nations, as is their mandated responsibility under the UN Framework Convention and the Paris Agreement.

India’s point is that if investments in green projects are also counted as climate finance, this would partially, shift the burden of mobilising resources on the developing countries as they can be blamed for not creating the right conditions for attracting investments.

“NCQG cannot be changed into an investment goal when it is a unidirectional provision and mobilisation goal (in Paris Agreement) from the developed to the developing countries. Paris Agreement is clear on who is to provide and mobilise the climate finance — it is the developed countries,” India said, while speaking on behalf of Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC).



ON GURPURAB

Devotees at a langar at the Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Ludhiana on Friday. Gurmeet Singh

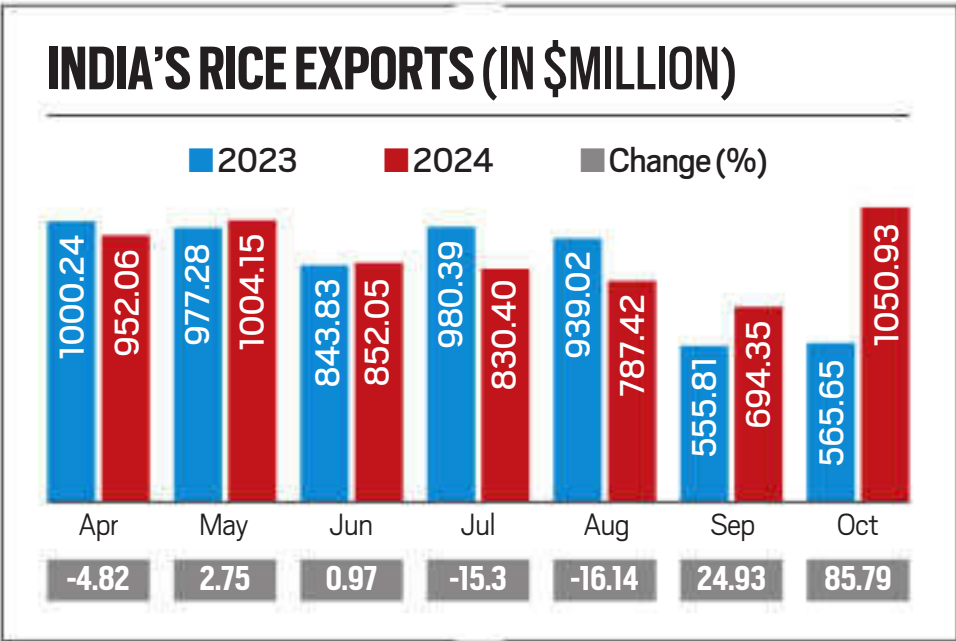
Govt steps to ease shipments spur rice exports to cross \$1 billion mark in Oct

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

INDIA’S RICE exports crossed the \$1 billion figure in October, following a slew of measures taken by the government to ease rice shipments.

According to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry data released Thursday, rice exports valued \$1,050.93 million in October 2024, which is 85.79 per cent higher as compared to \$565.65 million in the same month last year. The rice exports were at \$694.35 million in September this year.

The sharp jump in rice shipments comes after the government took several steps to ease rice exports in the last two months. On September 28, the



Centre had lifted the ban on export of non-basmati white rice.

After that, on October 23, the government removed the \$490 per tonne minimum export price (MEP) bar. On September 27, the government removed the

20% export duty on non-basmati white rice, and halved export duty on three other categories of rice. The duty on ‘rice in the husk (paddy or rough)’, ‘husked (brown) rice’, and ‘parboiled rice’ was reduced from 20 per cent to

10 per cent and eventually made nil on October 22.

With a jump in October, the overall rice export increased by 5.27 per cent to \$6,171.35 million during the first seven months (April-October) of 2024-25, as compared to \$5,862.23 million in the corresponding period last fiscal. Till the end of September, this year, India’s overall rice exports (\$5,120.43 million) were 3.33 per cent lower as compared to \$5,296.58 million during the first half of the last financial year.

India is the second largest producer and the biggest exporter of rice, next only to China, and the two countries account for over half of the world’s rice production.

China, however, is also the biggest consumer of rice, leaving little for exports.

Kerala HC wants curbs on tuskers at fests, Pooram officials upset

Court says no religion mandates use of elephants in festivals, issues norms

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 15

THE KERALA High Court has observed that there is no “essential religious practice” that “mandates the use of elephants in festivals”, and issued guidelines for regulating the number of elephants that can be deployed on the basis of the space available, and capping the time that the animals can be paraded to three hours at a time.

The guidelines, issued on Thursday, have upset the organisers of Kerala’s iconic Thrissur Pooram festival, at which decorated elephants are a major attraction.

The court raised concerns, pointing out that over 30 per cent of captive elephants in the state have died in the last seven years. As per court documents, there were 509 captive elephants in the state in 2018, and 160 of them have died.

In proceedings initiated suo motu on “matters pertaining to inaction of the government in protection of animal rights”, a Division Bench of Justices A K Jayasankaran Nambiar and P Gopinath on Thursday said the state should strictly implement the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012.

According to the guidelines issued by the court, elephants must get a rest period, which will not be less than three days, between two exhibitions; the temporary tethering facility for elephants should be clean and spacious; there should be adequate space for exhibition or parading of elephants; the number of elephants paraded should be decided based on the available space; elephants should not be paraded on public roads during day time; and their parading should not last for more than three hours at a time.

Reacting to the court directive, Girish Kumar, the secretary of the Thiruvambadi temple board that organises Thrissur Pooram, said on Friday: “If we follow the restrictions, Pooram will have to be shifted to a vast ground or paddy field. The direction that a particular amount of space (eight metres) should be left between two elephants is meant to destroy madathil varavu and elanjithara melam (major attractions of the festival involving elephants). Certain NGOs are out to destroy festivals.”

Kerala Forest Minister A K Saseendran said the government would examine the court guidelines and move an appeal if required. “Steps will be taken for the smooth conduct of Pooram and other festivals in the traditional manner,” he said.

Bandhavgarh jumbo deaths: NGT sends notice to MP, Centre

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

TAKING SUO motu cognizance of news reports on the death of 10 elephants in Madhya Pradesh’s Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) last month, the National Green Tribunal’s principal bench has issued notice to the state and the Union government.

The tribunal directed them to file affidavits by the second week of December after noting that there seemed to be indications regarding violation of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, and the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and consisting of judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member Afroz Ahmad passed the order on Tuesday, which was made public on Thursday. The case was then transferred to the NGT’s central zone bench in Bhopal.

The tribunal order said the matter relates to the mysterious death of 10 elephants in BTR and that initial investigations have linked the deaths to contamination due to Kodo millets. It noted

EXPLAINED
What toxicology reports says

ACCORDING TO the toxicology report of the 10 elephants that died at BTR, they had consumed a “large quantity” of Kodo millet plants that were fungus-infected. The report also rejected suspicions that the elephants may have been intentionally poisoned. This was after the samples tested negative for several other toxic substances.

that samples have been sent for analysis to Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Uttar Pradesh, and a forensic lab in Sagar district, Madhya Pradesh.

The order also noted, “The news item highlights that Kodo millet... when contaminated with mycotoxins, it can be susceptible to fungal contamination, particularly during the monsoon season, when the crop is harvested in damp conditions.”

Her sister’s killers felicitated, Kavitha Lankesh asks: Are they martyrs?

a clean chit and it is not that they are no longer accused. Are these guys martyrs or freedom fighters for them to be honoured?”, she tells *The Indian Express* in Bengaluru.

Kavitha has decided to write to the trial court and the Congress government in Karnataka on the felicitations of the accused.

“There is a sense that the rule for bail is applied differently for different people. So many people who were suffering in jail were denied bail for so many years — Umar Khalid, Sai Baba who died recently, Fr Stan Swamy, all those activists...,” says Kavitha, the younger of the two daughters of celebrated Kannada writer-journalist, the late P Lankesh, who founded the Lankesh Patrike.

What is exasperating about the bail granted to Gauri’s alleged killers, she says, is that the accused are involved “in four murders that are interconnected”.



Kavitha Lankesh with a portrait of her sister Gauri Lankesh, who was killed outside her home in 2017

The members of the Right-wing crime syndicate accused in Gauri’s murder were also accused of the murders of 69-year-old ra-

tionalist Narendra Dabholkar in Pune on August 20, 2013, and that of 81-year-old leftist thinker Govind Pansare in Kolhapur on February 16, 2015 (both in Maharashtra), and 77-year-old scholar MM Kalburgi in Dharwad in Karnataka on August 30, 2015.

Despite the setbacks, Kavitha has soldiered on. In 2022, her documentary Gauri won the best film award at the South Asian Film Festival of Montreal and the Best Human Rights Film at the Toronto Women’s Film Festival in 2022.

It was while working on Gauri that Kavitha came face to face with the lives her sister had touched through her work.

“While working on the documentary, I met so many people Gauri worked with — displaced tribals from Diddahalli, people from Bababudangiri (where she worked for harmony)... that’s when I realised the causes she was fighting for. Until then, she was in

her own world and I was in mine... selfish and concerned only with my own family, my daughter and my things,” says the 49-year-old filmmaker.

“Also, the day after Gauri went, we had kept her body for public viewing. So many people turned up. I did not expect so many. That is when I realised that she has made a massive impact.” It’s this realisation — “that you need people like Gauri for a larger picture” — that transformed a self-effacing Kavitha into the public face of her family’s quest for justice.

“Being in public is difficult and I tend to avoid it because I am not a very public person or speaker. But for my sister’s issues, I have to go, I thought. People would have made a lot of effort to protest the murder and I felt I must show solidarity as a family member even if I am not a great speaker in public. When it comes to talking about politics, I am not very articulate. In

my heart I am secular and constitutionally aware, but as a speaker on issues I am not confident,” she says. “There are arguments that she (Gauri) went overboard... I say to them, fine, if you are opposed to it, you can argue, file a case, but not kill somebody,” she says.

Despite her best efforts to stay strong, Kavitha has found herself breaking down on a few occasions. One of the deeply emotional moments for Kavitha was when she was called to the witness box in the trial court to testify as court witness Number 1 on July 4, 2022.

She choked back tears in court as she maintained her position that her sister was targeted by the Right-wing for her writing and speeches. “When I went as a witness, I could not face the video where the killers were presented in court. It was very, very disturbing. I did not have the heart to look at them,” she says.

Since her appearance as a wit-

ness, Kavitha has been gathering updates on the progress of the trial from Special Public Prosecutor S Balakrishnan and former colleagues of her sister. “To go personally and face all these things is very difficult for me. I keep getting the updates on the case,” she says.

Kavitha says that growing up, she and her sister were very socially conscious — a trait she attributes to a hard wiring and their way of life. “It is the way we lived, the way we read, the way we were brought up. When Appa (P Lankesh) was in theatre or film or writing, he fought against a lot of injustices,” says Kavitha, who is now the president of FIRE (Film Industry for Rights and Equality), a newly formed group fighting for women’s rights and against abuse in the Kannada film industry.

“It is such a patriarchal society everywhere and especially in the film industry. I will stand for what I believe in,” she says.

10 newborns die in Jhansi medical college blaze

Inquiry panel, comprising Commissioner, DIG formed

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 15

TEN NEWBORNS died after a fire broke out in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of state-run Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College in Uttar Pradesh's Jhansi on Friday night.

According to officials, several fire brigade vehicles were rushed to the spot, and dozens of children were rescued, but several newborns did not make it.

The fire also led to a stampede-like situation at the hospital, officials said.

Visuals from outside the hospital showed anguished parents breaking down. "Mera bacha mara hai (my child is dead)," said a man, hyperventilating, as two women waited behind him.

Visuals also showed charred equipment in the ward where

the newborns were ostensibly kept. Several people could be seen climbing out of windows that had blackened borders because of the thick smoke.

Jhansi District Magistrate Avinash Kumar told mediapersons that staff at the NICU told officials that the fire broke out between 10:30 and 10:45 pm.

The NICU has two sections – the outer unit for babies in a stable condition and the inner unit for those in a critical condition. The fire is suspected to have originated in the inner unit, possibly caused by a short circuit.

"Almost all the babies in the outer unit are safe. However, 10 babies who were in the inner unit lost their lives. Many others were rescued, and rescue operations are still underway," the DM said. He added that the injured babies are being treated.

A two-member inquiry committee, comprising the

Commissioner and the DIG, has been formed to probe the incident and submit a report to the Chief Minister.

In a post online, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the deaths are "extremely sad and heartbreaking". "The district administration and officials concerned have been instructed to carry out relief and rescue operations on a war footing. I pray to Lord Ram to provide salvation to the departed souls and speedy recovery to those injured," he wrote.

An official statement said Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, also the state's health minister, and the principal secretary of health have left for Jhansi on the directions of the CM.

In May this year, six newborns, aged between one day and 25 days, died when a fire broke out at a private neonatal care facility in Delhi's Vivek Vihar. **-WITH PTI INPUTS**

'ARRESTED BECAUSE HE RAISED QUESTIONS'

In Doda, lone AAP MLA joins chorus for release of activist detained under PSA

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, NOVEMBER 15

THE ROW over the detention of 30-year-old social activist Rehmatullah Padder under the stringent Public Safety Act in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda escalated Thursday, with the state's lone Aam Aadmi Party MLA Mehraj Malik calling on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to help ensure his immediate release.

In his post on X, Doda MLA Malik claimed the activist had been arrested for raising a "civic issue". Paddar, a volunteer with the Doda-based non-governmental organisation ABABEEL, was arrested on November 10 on charges of being an "OGW (over-ground worker)" and a sympathiser of militants and continuously indulges in anti-national activities through ISI/Pak based settled militants".

Malik joins a growing chorus of civil society volunteers who are

calling for Padder's release.

In his post, Malik claimed Padder was detained for having raised sanitation problems. Padder had posted a video slamming solid waste management in Doda's Ward No.7, claiming that authorities here burned garbage despite the government spending crores of rupees on waste segregation.

"This young man is detained under PSA today, yesterday he had raised questions on distt administration Doda for their failure. This area could not be cleaned but he is arrested now. This is Swatchh Bharat of Modi," he said, tagging Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in the post.

In a second post on November 13, he said: "Appeal to Hon'ble CM@OmarAbdullah ji take up issue with home ministry, that before any PSA is imposed by the DM, a judicial or legal committee

should be established at the district/state level to examine the dossier's authenticity. Most cases are quashed in the first hearing as they are often rooted in revenge. It's a matter of the precious carrier of youth".

In his order on November 9, Doda District Magistrate Harvinder Singh cited a police dossier claiming that "the subject is consistently trying to act against the security of the State and has been taken into custody in the past as well to protect the State & its citizens from his ill designs".

"The subject is a strong motivator of Jihad and has good oratory skills, with an ability to attract a large number of people towards anti-national activities, especially the youth. He has the habit of speaking against the nation, its secular values and the security forces, trying to incite the masses, especially the youth, which have every propensity to create serious situations for the



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CBC-17101/11/0011/2425

Online job fraud: Bengaluru Police finds links to 43 cases, arrest four from Rajasthan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 15

THE BENGALURU Police have arrested four persons from Rajasthan in connection with an online job fraud and found that the bank accounts used for the alleged offence has links to 43 cases in 15 states.

A case was registered in September this year about a Rs 12.43 lakh fraud in which the complainant was promised big payments after being offered part-time job and told to transfer ₹12.43,250 to various bank accounts.

The probe revealed that the funds swindled were transferred to 14 bank accounts and many of those who opened the "mule accounts" were students.

Police tracked the mobile numbers of the persons who lured the students to open the accounts and traced them to Rajasthan — Abhay Dhan, 19, Aravind Kumar 19, both from Jodhpur, and Saway Singh, 21, Pavan Bishnoi, 18, from Jaisalmer. They were remanded in judicial

custody on October 28.

"The CEN police gathered information about the bank accounts of the accused. The bank account holders were called to the police station and interrogated. Many students were found to have been used to open mule bank accounts," a senior Bengaluru police officer said.

"After opening the mule bank accounts, the accused allegedly took away the bank account passbook, cheque books, ATM cards and the mobile SIM card used to open the account from the students," the officer said.

"The investigations revealed that two persons were in Rajasthan and two were in Bengaluru," the police said.

Bengaluru South East CEN police got a breakthrough when two of the suspects came to Bengaluru to open more bank accounts and were detained from a paying guest facility in Bengaluru's Bommanahalli on October 20.

The Bengaluru police also carried out searches in Udaipur at a house the gang was using as a base.

Before Uttarakhand crash that killed 6 youths, house party and a late-night ride

AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, NOVEMBER 15

WITH HIS family on their way to attend a wedding in Jaipur, 25-year-old Siddhesh Agarwal invited people to his Dehradun house for a party on the night of Monday-Tuesday, before the horrific car crash which left him injured and six of his friends dead, a prima facie probe and reconstruction of the sequence of events suggests.

According to officials, one of his friends, Atul Agarwal (24), arrived in a new car purchased by his father, and it is believed that the group later decided to take it for a drive in the city.

On the way, they picked up Kamakshi (20) and Guneeet (19). Also in the car were Rishabh Jain (24), Navya Goyal (23), and Kunal Kukreja (23).

It was during this drive that the crash took place. According to police, the car attempted to pass a container truck near Kishan Nagar Chowk, but the driver misjudged the truck's

speed, believing he could pass safely after it had moved ahead. However, the car collided with it at high speed.

Siddhesh sustained serious injuries and is being treated at Synergy Hospital, with officials saying he is critical. His six friends in the car with him all died. According to a statement issued by Dehradun police, Siddhesh's father Vipin Kumar Agarwal has lodged a complaint at Kotwali Cantonment regarding the accident.

A case was registered under section 106 (2) of the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita, which deals with the punishment for causing death by rash and negligent driving and fleeing the scene without reporting the incident. SSP Ajai Singh told The Indian Express that Agarwal did not name anyone in the FIR, but got the case registered so the circumstances under which the accident took place can be investigated. Earlier, Vipin Agarwal said he had spoken to his son at around 9pm on the night before the incident.

'Liquor ban means big money for officials': HC pulls up Bihar govt over prohibition law

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, NOVEMBER 15

COMING DOWN heavily on the Bihar government's prohibition law, the Patna High Court has said that the legislation has "given rise to unauthorised trade of liquor and other contraband items" and has become a tool for government officials to make "big money".

"The draconian provisions have become handy for the po-

lice, who are in tandem with the smugglers," the Patna HC said in a scathing ruling passed on October 19. The 24-page order by Justice Purnendu Singh was uploaded on November 13.

"Innovative ideas to hoodwink law enforcing agencies have evolved to carry and deliver the contraband. Not only the police officials (and) excise officials, but also officers of the state tax department and the transport department love the liquor ban — for them it means

big money," the Single Bench said.

The court's observations were in response to a petition by Khagaria resident Mukesh Kumar Paswan, who was suspended as inspector of Bypass Police Station, Patna, in November 2020 after a stash of liquor was found in a raid by the state excise department.

The HC quashed the suspension order against Paswan by calling it an "infringement of natural justice".



NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
DRM/ Electrical, North Western Railway, Jodhpur for & on behalf of President of India, invites E- tender for the following works. (1) Tender No.: 33/2024-25, Name of work: Electrical work i/c with provision of construction of 21nos Type II, 21 nos Type III and 01 no. Type IV staff quarters in GOTN-SWF Section and provision of construction of 21 nos Type II, 21 nos Type III and 04 nos Type IV staff quarters in DNA-GOTN Section. Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 29204653/- (2) Tender No.: GSU-ELECTG10, Name of work: Electrical work in c/w New block station between Laneia-SONU station (24kms section) on THM-SONU line and Electrical work in c/w New block station between Thaiyat Hamira- Laneia (29 kms) on THM-SONU line. Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 5937469.76/- (1) Complete details of tenders can be seen on website: <http://www.tenders.gov.in> (2) Date & time of closing of e-tender: 06.12.2024 upto 15.00 hrs. (3) Date & time of opening of e-tender: After 15.00 hrs. on 06.12.2024, 1321-DK/24
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First power transmission from Nepal to Bangladesh via Indian grid begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE FIRST power transmission from Nepal to Bangladesh via the national grid of India started on Friday.

Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, inaugurated the facility, along with Md. Fouzul Kabir Khan, Adviser, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Bangladesh, and Dipak Khadka, Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Nepal through a virtual event, an official statement said.

According to the statement, the event was hosted by the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Government of Nepal.

This occasion marks the first trilateral power transaction that has been carried out through the Indian grid, it stated.

The Government of India had announced its decision to facilitate the first trilateral power transaction from Nepal to Bangladesh, through Indian grid with an export of up to 40 MW of power during the visit of the former Prime Minister of Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' to India from May 31 to June 3, 2023. During the visit, both sides had expressed their commitment towards greater sub-regional co-operation, including in the energy sector, which would lead to increased inter-linkages between the economies for mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

Subsequently, a tripartite power sales agreement between NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam, Nepal Electricity Authority and Bangladesh Power Development Board was signed on October 3, 2024 in Kathmandu. The start of this power flow from Nepal to Bangladesh through India is expected to boost sub-regional connectivity in the power sector, it added.



सेंट्रल बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया
Central Bank of India

Regional Office, B-Block, Mauryalok Complex, Patna-800001
POSSESSION NOTICE [UNDER RULE 8 (1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002]

Notice is hereby given under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act), 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of the power conferred under sub-section (12) of section 13 read with [rule 3] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002. The Authorized Officer issued a Demand Notice on the dates noted against account as mentioned herein after, calling them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the under noted borrower/guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sec. 13(4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned against account. The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of Central Bank of India for the amount and interest thereon mentioned against account herein below.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section (13) of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Sl. No.	Branch	Name of Borrower/ Guarantor	Description of immovable property/ies	Date of Demand Notice Under 13(2)	Date of Symbolic Possession	Amount Outstanding
1.	Frazer Road	Mr. Harendra Kumar Dixit S/o Late Sher Lal Dixit & Mr. Vikash Kumar S/o Mr. Harendra Kumar Dixit	Security: Land & Building in the name of Mr. Harendra Kumar Dixit, S/o Late Sher Lal Dixit, Deed No.: 2793, Khata No.: 197, Plot No.: 241, Area: 15 Dhur, Location: Mauza: Jalalpur, (Abhimanyu Nagar), Pargana: Pulhwar Sarif, Thana No.: 22, Boundary:- North: Shiv Prasad Singh, South: Smt. Chanchala Devi, East: Chitrnanjan Singh, West: Rasta 16 Ft.	04.07.2024	13.11.2024	Rs. 541940.87 (Rupees Five Lakh Forty One Thousand Nine hundred Forty and Eighty Seven Paise only) as on 03/07/2024 and interest thereon.
2.	HANUMAN NAGAR	Mr. Dharmendra Panday S/o Sahdev Panday & Shabnam Kumari D/o Mr. Dharmendra Panday	Security: Land & Building in the name of Dharmendra Panday S/o Sahdev Panday, Deed No.: Mortgage Deed No. 12221 dated 20.12.2017, Khata No.: 143, Khesra No.: 592, Plot No.: 1579, Area : 10 Dhur, Location: Mauza : Saidpur Musallah under Survey PS: Pirbohore Present PS: Kadamkuan, Thana No.: 03, Tauzi No.: 320, Ward No.: 13/18, Holding No.: 445/461, Sheet No.: 88, Dist.: Patna, Boundary:- North: Deep Narayan Prasad, South: Binay Kumar Panday, East: Shankar Singh, West: 4 Ft wide road then Binod Prasad.	02.08.2024	13.11.2024	Rs. 1613881.00 (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Thirteen Thousand Eight hundred Eighty One Only) as on 02/08/2024 and interest thereon.
3.	NDA	Mr. Nand Kishore Mehta S/o Late Sri Bishun Mehta, Mr. Vikash Kumar & Mr. Sonu Kumar both S/o Mr. Nand Kishore Mehta	Security: Land & Building in the name of Mr. Nand Kishore Mehta S/o Late Sri Bishun Mehta, Deed No. : 3233 dated 17.08.1925, Area: 425.5 Sqft, Location: Mohalla : Nasarganj, Bettal, Danapur, Patna, Property Details: Plot No.: 794, Khata No.: 249, Mahal: 02/01, Thana No. : 17, Holding No.: 358/418, New: 387, PS: Danapur, Patna, Bihar, Boundary:- North: Road, South: Janak Mahto, East: Gali, West: Prakash Mahto.	27.05.2024	13.11.2024	Rs. 467152.47/- + Intt (Rs. Four Lakh Sixty Seven thousand one hundred fifty two and Forty Seven Paise Only + Intt) as on 27/05/2024 and interest thereon.

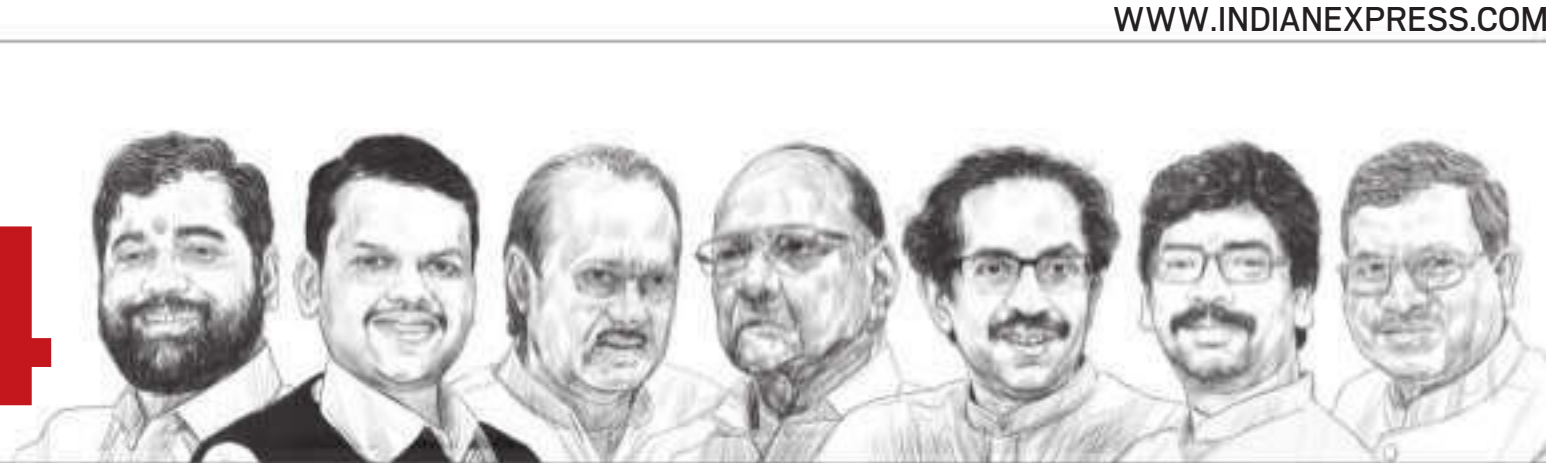
Date : 15.11.2024
Place : Patna

Authorised officer
CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA

NOTICE
Notice u/s 82 of CrPC against Mohd. Javed Khan S/o Mr. Guljanat Akhozada by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-01, 02, Ground Floor, Main Building, Patiala House Court, New Delhi, in relation to Ct. Case No. 14385/2017

DATE OF ORDER	01.05.2024	NAME OF PROCESS SERVER
DATE OF FILING OF PF		
DATE OF ISSUE	15.07.2024	NUMBER OF PROCESS
NO OF DOCUMENTS ANNEXED		
NEXT DATE OF HEARING	21.12.2024 at 10 A.M.	DATE OF RETURN

Ct. Case. No. 14385/2017
U/S 135 (1) (a) and 135 (1) (b) of Customs Act, 1962.
DRI vs. OBEDULLAH @ OBAID AND ORS.
In the Court of Sh. Abhishek Kumar, Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-01, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi Proclamation Requiring The Appearance of a Person Accused (See Section 82)
Whereas complainant has been made before me that Mohd. Javed Khan S/o Mr. Guljanat Akhozada R/o House A-416, Gali No. 9, Village Wazirabad, Delhi-110084 committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence punishable under section as mentioned above, it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before next date of hearing.
Sd/-
Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-01, 02, Ground Floor, Main Building, Patiala House Court, New Delhi



INTERVIEW: MAHARASHTRA CM EKNATH SHINDE

‘PM didn’t take names... slogan for unity’

“Amit Shah did not say bring Fadnavis back... At another rally, he said we will contest under the leadership of Shinde”

SINCE SPLITTING the Shiv Sena in 2022 and rising to the Chief Minister's chair, **EKNATH SHINDE** has become a pillar of the ruling Mahayuti alliance in Maharashtra. In the Assembly polls, he is leading the fight against the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). Talking to **VALLABH OZARKAR** and **SANDEEP SINGH**, Shinde appears confident that the Mahayuti government has taken enough course-correcting measures to win come November 23. *Interview excerpts:*

Your government has launched several projects and schemes. Why do you think the Mahayuti is then falling back on slogans like ‘Bateenge toh katenge (Divided we fall)’ and ‘Ek hain toh safe hain (United we are safe)’?

We are contesting on the development plank. But what Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji is saying is we all should be united and he has not taken the name of any religion or caste. He said ‘*Ek hain toh safe hain*’, which means we should be united and contest by bringing all communities together and increasing the voting percentage. The way Britishers would divide and rule, the Congress is doing the same and indulging in casteist and communal politics.

The reason behind saying this (the slogan) is because of what happened in the Lok Sabha polls. We saw low polling percentage,

and so it is being done (the slogan being raised) to motivate the Mahayuti cadre.

Are these slogans being used to divert attention from agrarian issues?

Unity is important for development and to motivate cadre. As for agrarian issues, we have resolved the issue of soyabean. Under the Bhavantar Yojana, we will be paying the difference between the MSP and the market rate to farmers.

What happened during the Lok Sabha polls?

The fake narrative that the Modi government would change the Constitution and remove reservation led to (the results). But now people know the reality. On the one hand, they speak about the Constitution and reservation, and on the other hand, Rahul Gandhi goes abroad and speaks about abolishing reservations (the Congress leader had said the party could think of ending reservations only if the situation changes).

Have you been able to reverse the Lok Sabha narrative?

Yes. We started several schemes people are benefiting from. We have started schemes for sisters, brothers and farmers. We have not left out anyone.

In Pune, Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to cadre



Shinde said the Mahayuti will decide on CM face after polls. PTI

to strengthen Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis. Is there an issue with the CM post?

He did not say to bring Fadnavis back, he said ensure the victory of Mahayuti and Fadnavis. In another rally, he said we will contest under the leadership of Eknath Shinde and post-poll we will decide about the CM's position. Ensuring the victory of Fadnavis is as a candidate.

There are no differences or problems between us.

In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, in at least 20 seats there are straight fights between you and the Uddhav

Thackeray-led Sena (UBT). How do you see the contest between the Senas?

We defeated them during the Lok Sabha polls. Our strike rate

was better and vote share increased. In the Lok Sabha, people have proved which is the real Shiv Sena, and in this election, people will further prove it. *Iss chunav mein ab doodh ka doodh aur paani ka*

paani ho jayega (In this election, the truth will emerge) as people are going to vote for those who do work.

You said you will increase the Ladki Bahin Yojana's monthly grant from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,100.

The Opposition said it will give Rs 3,000. How far will this competitive populism go?

This very Opposition initially opposed the scheme. But when they realised it has become a superhit... they stole the scheme from our agenda. We have already said once the government is strengthened, we will give it (the increased instalments).

We don't make poll *jumlas* (gimmicks) like them. They make announcements in their manifesto but after coming to power they make a U-turn by saying it was a spelling mistake. *Hum chaadar dekh kar pair failane wale hain* (We stay within our limits).

So you will not get into such a competition beyond your electoral promises?

The government cannot be run by distributing money alone. We will not get into any competition on this.

In Vidarbha and Marathwada, two regions that could decide the results, the Congress and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP) are getting traction.

In the Lok Sabha polls, there was a different situation. That has changed now. Welfare schemes and other works of the government have given relief to people.

After the Lok Sabha polls, the Mahayuti said consolidation of votes in Muslim-dominated

areas favoured the MVA.

The MVA scared minorities and Dalits by stating if Modi ji comes back, then there would be problems for them... Here, they (the MVA) created fear among Muslims voters and hence they voted for the Opposition. But we have not excluded Muslims from development. Muslims are also getting the benefit of the schemes. I think they will rethink and realise the Congress has only used them as a vote bank. We don't want to use Muslims as a vote bank.

What is your view on Maratha activist Manoj Jarange-Patil opting out of the polls?

We have given the Marathas what we had promised. We gave 10% reservation without touching the quota of other communities and formed the Justice (ret'd) Sandeep Shinde Committee for Kunbi certificates. So we will get the benefit (of Jarange-Patil withdrawing). Earlier governments and Opposition leaders (of the MVA) only used Marathas for vote bank politics. They kept the Marathas deprived for their own political benefits. Now, the Marathas will also think about it.

Fadnavis said an attempt was made to finish him ‘politically’ during the MVA government. You were in the government at the time. What was that plan?

(The MVA) planned to jail BJP leaders... But I did not allow it.



Sugarcane harvesting workers leaving Maharashtra. Express

With polling after start of sugarcane crushing season, 12 lakh may go ‘missing’

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
DHARASHIV, SOLAPUR, NOVEMBER 15

A TACTIC aimed at keeping sugarcane workers back in their native places for voting day in Maharashtra appears to be backfiring for the ruling Mahayuti.

With Maharashtra sugar mills getting licences to start their crushing operation only on Thursday, a day before the start of the season, many like Raju Gurade have already headed out to other states for work.

Taking his *tohi* (team) of 24 people to harvest cane in Karnataka earlier this week, Gurade, who is from Beed, said waiting any longer would have made them lose out on the harvesting window in Karnataka.

What about voting on November 20? Gurade smiled: “We will come back... of course there are conditions to that.”

Sources said the delay in the issue of licences to sugar mills for start of the crushing operations was on account of the expectation by a high-power committee headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde that polls in Maharashtra would be held in the second week of November. Accordingly, it set November 15 as the date for the start of the crushing season, expecting the labourers to be done voting by then.

But then came the Election Commission announcement fixing November 20 as polling day.

As part of a well-oiled mechanism, sugar mills arrange for harvesting and transportation of sugarcane from fields to their plants. The labour for harvesting and transportation is arranged through middlemen, who are paid an advance, with the labourers getting Rs 460 per tonne of cane harvested. Per day, a *tohi* of 10-12 labourers can harvest 15-20 tonnes, which is precious income that cannot be foregone.

One of the districts where migration is set to have an impact on the poll outcome is Marathwada's

Beed, the home district of BJP leader Pankaja Munde and her cousin and Agriculture Minister Dhananjay Munde of the NCP.

Beed alone sees annual migration of 5 lakh labourers – mainly Vanjaris – for harvesting work. This will affect the prospects of Dhananjay, who is contesting from Beed, with Mundes belonging to the Vanjari community.

Marathwada has been the heart of the Maratha quota stir for the past year, and even saw some violence between the community and OBC groups. Pankaja's loss in the Lok Sabha elections to the NCP (SP)'s Bajrang Sonawane from Beed – a family turf for years – was attributed to the Maratha consolidation against the ruling Mahayuti, whom the community accuses of dragging its feet on the quota issue. If the Maratha anger again plays out, Dhananjay will need the Vanjari votes even more to retain his seat, which he won in 2019 with the unidivided NCP.

In all, Maharashtra employs about 8-8.5 lakh labourers for sugar harvesting. Another four lakh travel out to Karnataka and Gujarat. As per an estimate of the Maharashtra Sugarcane Cutters and Transport Association, more than 12 lakh sugarcane cutters from Marathwada, North Maharashtra and Vidarbha may miss voting as a result. Jeewan Rathod, the president of the association, has asked the government to make arrangements to ensure that the labourers can vote.

Rathod has also appealed to the Bombay High Court to direct the EC to make the arrangements, and to ask the state's Sugar Commissioner to coordinate with the sugar mills to declare a holiday for workers on election day.

A BJP leader in Beed said all parties could try to get the labourers back for voting. “But that would involve spending on transport, with no guarantee they would actually come back.”

Sugar mills in Maharashtra, on their part, have said that the labourers hired from other places in the state would be allowed to go home to vote.

OBC face of quota strife, Bhujbal now in choppy waters

ZEESHAN SHAIKH
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 15

CHHAGAN BHUJBAL has bounced back from several challenges in his 50-year political career, including party flips, Sharad Pawar's anger, and a jail stint. One of the toughest is up ahead, as the 77-year-old seeks to retain the Yevla Assembly seat that he has made his bastion since 2004.

Sharad Pawar chose Yevla for his first political speech after the NCP split led by nephew Ajit Pawar last year. On Tuesday, when Pawar Senior returned to Yevla to campaign for his faction of the party – NCP (SP) – which has put up Manikrao Shinde as its candidate, he dedicated a big chunk of his speech to Bhujbal's “betrayal”.

His former protegee had a reputation of ditching his mentors, Pawar said, hinting at Bhujbal's parting earlier with the late Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray.

Yevla, located 250km north of Mumbai, struggled with underdevelopment. This was when some prominent local residents decided to make an open appeal to “a senior state politician” to represent them. Such a personality as their MLA, the residents believed, would get Yevla the attention and resources it deserved.

Bhujbal, who rose from a vegetable vendor in Mumbai's Byculla, was struggling and unsure of his political future after leaving the Sena. The Sena had vowed to decimate Bhujbal politically and, in 1995, fielded a lowly corporator, Bala Nadgaonkar, handpicked by Thackeray, to show Bhujbal his place.

In the subsequent 1999 polls, Bhujbal did not contest. When he did, and won, in 2004, as an NCP candidate from Yevla, he was made Deputy CM by Sharad Pawar. Bhujbal has won the seat four times since, and overseen large-scale development in Yevla.



Bhujbal is looking to retain his Yevla bastion. X

bency of 20 years is catching up, with a strong undercurrent of resentment against him among party workers for “favouring” hangers-on and family members. Son Pankaj is a two-time MLA from the neighbouring Nandgaon.

What set off the dip in Bhujbal's fortunes was his arrest in 2014 on money laundering charges. While his legal troubles have now subsided, his decision to align with Ajit Pawar and against Sharad Pawar in the NCP split has not gone down well in Yevla. Many of his supporters do not have sympathy for his decision to ditch Pawar Senior.

Bhujbal has also taken a very strong position against the Maratha quota. With Sharad Pawar, a Maratha leader, having their backing, Bhujbal, a member of the Mali OBC group, has been threatening any Maratha reservation would not be acceptable as it would come at the cost of OBCs. Shinde, the NCP (SP) Yevla candidate, is a Maratha.

With hurdles mounting, a more conciliatory Bhujbal has come to the fore now. He has been asking why Sharad Pawar is “selectively” targeting him, claiming other rebel NCP leaders have faced far less scrutiny. “People are playing the caste card and spreading the poison of casteism in society... Bhujbal works for everyone,” he has been telling voters.

IMAGE OF THE DAY



HAND IN HAND: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi campaigns in Godda, Jharkhand, on Friday. PTI

DECODE POLITICS

Cong Jharkhand manifesto in ‘silence period’, why a row

DAMINI NATH & ASAD REHMAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE CONGRESS released its manifesto for the Jharkhand Assembly polls on Tuesday, a day before the first phase, prompting a complaint by the BJP of violation of the “48-hour silence period” before polling. What does the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which is enforced after the polling dates are announced, say on the issue?

What has the BJP alleged?

On Wednesday, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Congress had violated election laws. “Rules mandate that parties cannot campaign and release manifestos in the ‘silence period’, which in this case started on Monday evening. Despite knowing this, the Congress released its manifesto on Tuesday. We have submitted a complaint to the Election Commission,” he said.

What does the Congress say?

The Congress denies any violations of the MCC with AICC general secretary in-charge of Jharkhand, Ghulam Ahmad Mir saying all parties can issue advertisements and manifestos till the last day. “The manifesto can be released any time between the announcement of polls and polling day. Tuesday was a day before polling for Phase 1 but it fell in the middle of campaigning for phase 2 (on November 20). I do not think there was any violation... Prime Minister Narendra Modi was speaking in Jharkhand on the day of polling, but in a part of the state where polling is due in the second phase,” Mir said.

On the delay in releasing the manifesto, a senior Congress leader in Jharkhand said the document was ready much in advance. “We had already announced guarantees with our allies but wanted to have a separate manifesto, so we released it (on Tuesday),” the leader said.

What do MCC and the



Cong released its manifesto on eve of polling for first phase. X

Representation of the People Act, 1951, say?

The MCC's “guidelines on election manifestos” were formulated after consultation with political parties in 2015 following a 2013 Supreme Court directive.

The EC agreed with the parties that thought it was the latter's right to draft manifestos, some guidelines could be framed in the interest of free and fair elections.

gle-phase election, the manifesto shall not be released during the prohibitory period.

The MCC has laid down rules even for multi-phased elections. “In case of multi-phased elections, manifestos shall not be released during the prohibitory periods... for all the phases of those elections,” the MCC rules read.

While the MCC is a moral code of ethics, the Representation of the People Act, 1951, carries penalties for violations. Section 126 covers “prohibition of public meetings during a period of 48 hours ending with an hour fixed for conclusion of poll”. According to this section, no person shall convene, hold, attend, join or address any public meeting or procession in connection with an election in the 48-hour period. It also prohibits displaying election material “by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus”. Violating Section 126 could attract a fine and/or two years imprisonment. However, the Section does not mention the word manifesto.

Has there been a precedent when a manifesto was released in the silence period?

In 2014, when Narendra Modi was its PM face, the BJP released its manifesto on April 7, the day of Phase 1 of the Lok Sabha polls. However, it was done before the poll panel amended the MCC to prohibit releasing manifestos in the silence period.

What can the EC do in case of a violation?

State chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar, who has examined the matter and sent a report to the poll panel, has held that the release of a manifesto during the silence period is a violation of the MCC. While the MCC does not include penalties, the EC is empowered to take action, including issuing warnings or censures, directing an FIR to be filed under the Representation of the People Act and placing a ban on campaigning by leaders or candidates, in the case of a violation.

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● INTERVIEW

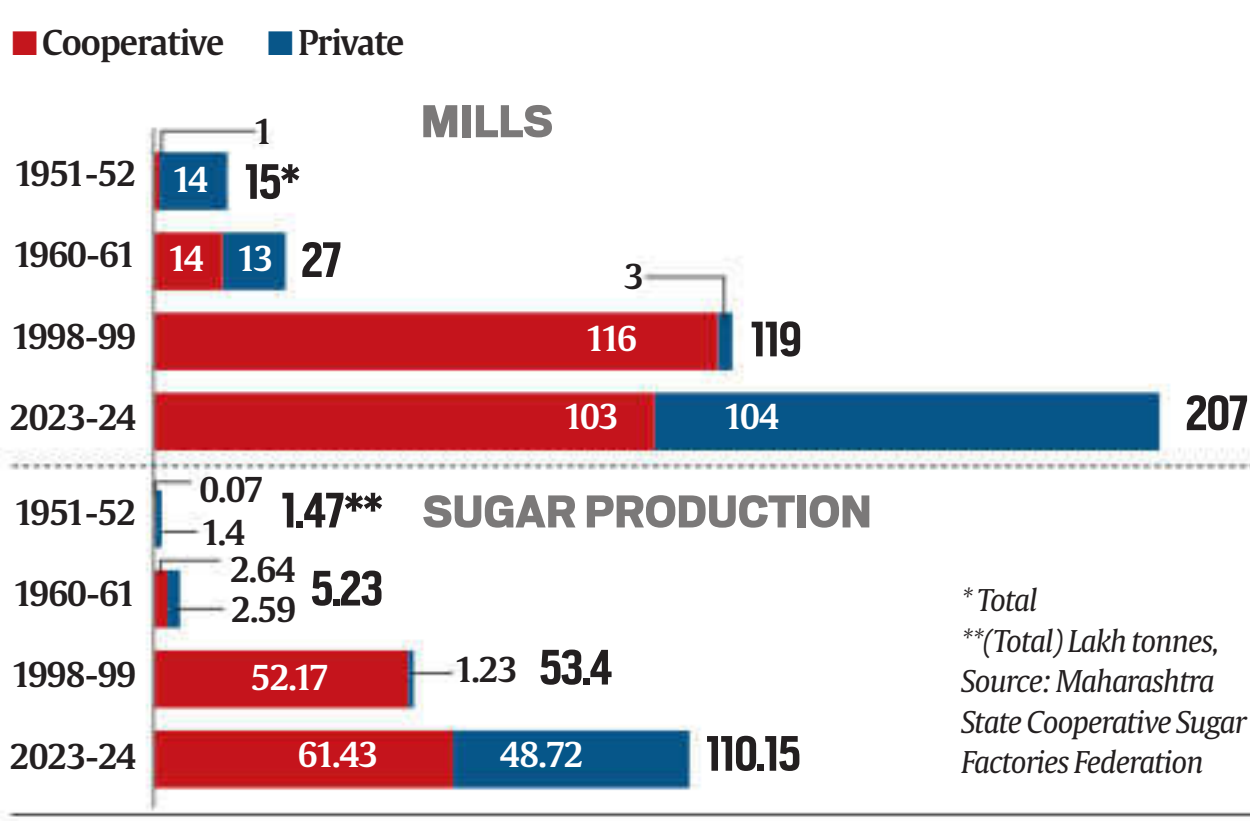
NEED NOT BRING SLOGANS, FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT: PANKAJA MUNDE

The new sugar barons

For long, sugar in Maharashtra has been synonymous with the cooperative sector. However, over the last 25 years, the landscape has changed — from three private mills in 1998-99 to over 200 now. In the run up to the elections, HARISH DAMODARAN and PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS map this shift as private mills now account for nearly half the state's sugar production



MAHARASHTRA COOPERATIVE VERSUS PRIVATE SUGAR MILLS



(Clockwise from top) Thombare at his sugar mill in Ranjani, in Maharashtra's Dharashiv district; former CM Y B Chavan discouraged private mills after 1958.

The other big players

Vilasrao Deshmukh's Manjara Group — managed by his sons, Amit and Dhiraj, and brother Diliprao — has grown from one to 10 mills that together crushed 53.02 lt of cane procured from roughly 1 lakh farmers in 2023-24. Five of these are cooperatives, all in Latur district, with a total capacity of 23,450 tcd. The rest — two in Latur and one each in Dharashiv, Parbhani and Nanded — are under private companies: TwentyOne Sugars, Jagruti Sugar & Allied Industries and Manjira Sugar Industries Ltd. Their combined capacity is higher at 27,600 tcd.

Equally big are the private sugar empires of the extended family of Sharad Pawar.

Baramati Agro, belonging to the Maratha leader's nephew Rajendra and grandnephew Rohit, has four mills — at Shetphalgade

(Pune), Kannad (Aurangabad), Chopda (Jalgaon) and Jamkhed (Ahmednagar) — with an aggregate capacity of 29,500 tcd and crushing 34.70 lt of cane in 2023-24.

Even bigger are the six mills — Daund (Pune), Jarandeshwar (Satara), Karjat (Ahmednagar), Omerga and Bhum (Dharashiv), and Samsherpur (Nandurbar) — linked to senior Pawar's estranged nephew, Ajit Pawar, who controls the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founded by his uncle. These mills have a total capacity of 58,000 tcd and crushed 66.96 lt in the last season, making him arguably the biggest of the sugar barons.

Both Ajit and Rohit Pawar are contesting this Assembly election — the former from the family bastion of Baramati and the latter from the Karjat Jamkhed constituency on the rival NCP (Sharad Pawar) faction's ticket. So are Vilasrao Deshmukh's sons, Amit and Dhiraj, as Congress candidates from Latur City and Latur Rural respectively.

How private mills flourished

The proliferation of private mills, including the new ones promoted by politicians (the Pawar family was traditionally associated with Baramati's Malegaon and Shri Someshwar cooperative factories), has partly to do with government policy.

In the past, not only were licences reserved for cooperatives, they were also allowed to meet 70 per cent of project costs through long-term loans from public financial institutions, with the Maharashtra government providing guarantees for their repayment. Even for the 30 per cent equity portion, the state government subscribed up to two-thirds of the share capital, which the cooperatives could gradually redeem at face value by deducting a part of the cane price payable to farmer-members.

That party ended with both de-licensing and the government ceasing to invest in the equity or stand guarantee for the loans of cooperative mills. Those who controlled the mills found it more expedient to start private factories on their own or even acquire sick cooperatives. The Jarandeshwar mill, for instance, was started as a cooperative by the Maratha strongman Vasantdada Patil's wife Shalini, before it was sold to a company allegedly connected to Ajit Pawar in 2010.

"When the option to file IEMs for private mills was made available, we went for it. It made no difference. Ultimately, we are serving farmers," claimed Dhiraj Deshmukh of the Manjara Group.

Privatisation, however, did little to change the political clout these sugar mills exercised in Maharashtra.

A former Managing Director of the Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "Look at it this way — a big mill would purchase cane from 20,000-30,000 farmers. Other than the mill, the promoter would also run a string of other establishments like educational institutes, medical colleges etc. That is a source of both patronage and prestige in the area."

Thus, while the mills may have changed in their structure, the promoters continue to be politically important. Take the case of the state's Minister of Public Health and Welfare and Shiv Sena candidate from Paranda (Dharashiv), Tanaji Sawant. His company, Bhairavnath Sugar Works, runs three mills in Dharashiv and two in Solapur.

Not all private mills have been success stories, though. Gopinath Munde's family floated the privately owned Pannageshwar Sugar Mills at Renapur (Latur) in 1999. That factory and the original Vaidyanath cooperative have virtually turned sick.

The same fate has befallen Armstrong Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd, the factories promoted by NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal's family at Malegaon in Nashik, and Shrigonda BJP MLA Babanrao Pachpute's Shri Saikrupa Sugar & Allied Industries in Ahmednagar.

Despite these setbacks, as Thombre realised early on, the needle has decisively moved in Maharashtra's sugar industry — from cooperatives to private.

WE ARE a private company in body, but co-operative in soul," declares Bhairavnath Bhagwanrao

Thombare, wearing a yellow hardhat and standing outside the ethanol distillery attached to his sugar mill in Maharashtra's Dharashiv district.

Thombare, 71, is the Chairman & Managing Director of Natural Sugar & Allied Industries Ltd, an Rs-800-crore-turnover company that runs Maharashtra's first ever sugarcane mill to be set up in the private sector after more than four decades.

It all started on September 7, 1998 — just a week after the sugar industry was de-licenced — when Thombare obtained an IEM (industrial entrepreneur memorandum) to establish a mill at Ranjani village in Kalamb taluka of then Osmanabad district. That mill, which could crush 1,250 tonnes of cane per day (tcd), was commissioned on February 29, 2000.

Today, besides this factory that can crush 5,000 tcd, Thombare's company owns another 2,500-tcd mill at Gunj-Sawana in Mahagaon taluka of Maharashtra's Yavatmal district. In the last 2023-24 season, the two mills together crushed 14.94 lakh tonnes (lt) of cane procured from some 22,000 farmers.

Thombare is part of a key shift in Maharashtra's sugar landscape — from a state where practically only cooperative mills were allowed to operate to one that's significantly controlled by private barons, many of them bigger than Thombare. In 2023-24, 104 out of Maharashtra's 207 operational mills were private. They crushed 46.5 per cent of the state's cane and produced over 44 per cent of its sugar. That's a far cry from 25 years ago — in 1998-99, there were merely three private factories which together produced just 2.3% of Maharashtra's total sugar.

With Maharashtra heading to the polls, which way the key players of the politically influential sugar industry — both cooperative and private — align is being keenly watched

It all started with Vajpayee

Traditionally, sugar in Maharashtra has been synonymous with cooperative mills.

Not surprising, given the preferential treatment the mills got from successive Congress governments, starting with Yashwantrao Balwantrao Chavan's, which made sure no new private sugar factory was started after 1958. Chavan, and also Vasantdada Patil after him, saw sugar as a tool for empowerment of the larger rural population and their own upwardly mobile Maratha farming community. Not granting any new private mill licences was an effective way to consolidate the community's leadership of the Congress party in Maharashtra.

Between 1951-52 and 1998-99, the number of private mills in the state shrank from 14 to three — Ravalgaon Sugar Farm (Nashik), New Phaltan Sugar Works (Satara) and Saswad Mali Sugar Factory (Solapur) — while that of cooperatives soared from 1 to 116.

As they grew in numbers, so did their political and social influence. With each mill procuring sugarcane from 10,000 or more farmers, it gave the chairman and directors of the cooperatives enormous powers to wield patronage that could extend to the political field. Often, the founder-chairman of a cooperative sugar mill would go on to assume bigger mantles like that of the local Member of Legislative Assembly or Parliament. They would, then, pass on the legacy to their sons and even grandsons. Maharashtra has had a long line of chief ministers — from Vasantdada Patil (who controlled the Farmers Cooperative Sugar Factory in Sangli) to Vilasrao Deshmukh (Manjara in Latur) — who rose through the sahakari (cooperative) route.

But all that is history as cooperative mills have made way for private sugar magnates. The credit for this goes to two men.

The first was Atal Bihari Vajpayee, whose government at the Centre, on August 31, 1998, de-licenced the sugar industry. Henceforth, anybody could freely set up a sugar mill, provided it was at a minimum 15-

km radial distance from an existing or proposed new factory.

The second person was Thombare, who showed the way to other private entrepreneurs. Thombare is ironically someone who cut his teeth in cooperatives. Between 1978 and 1983, he worked as chief accounts officer at the Ambajogai (Beed), Godavari Manar (Nanded) and Jai Jawan Jai Kisan (Latur) cooperative sugar factories. From there, he became the managing director of two cooperative mills — Manjara (Latur), promoted by former Congress chief minister, the late Vilasrao Deshmukh; and Vaidyanath (Beed), promoted by senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Gopinath Munde.

As Manjara's top executive during 1984-1997, Thombare oversaw the setting up of the factory and its operations from the 1986-87 sugar season (October-September). Munde's Vaidyanath mill came up in a record 11 months and, in 1998-99, was India's first to crush 5 lt of cane during a trial season.

"I was with Vaidyanath till 1999-2000. That was the trial season for my own factory, which took even less time (nine months) to be ready. I was then shuttling between the two locations. He (Munde) let me go in early 2000 after I found him an able replacement as managing director," recalls Thombare.

Thombare's Rs 18-crore project was financed by a consortium of urban cooperative banks that lent Rs 9 crore on the "personal guarantee" of Munde. The remaining 50 per cent equity funding came from the promoters and some 5,000 farmer-shareholders.

"Even today, 40 per cent shares in my company are held by 12,500 farmers... I am myself from a farmer family, born and raised till primary school in this village (Ranjani)," he says.

Over the last two decades, Thombare has invested heavily in a string of initiatives at his mills. The Ranjani mill has a 23-megawatt cogeneration plant (which burns bagasse, the fibrous residue after juice is extracted from

sugarcane) and a 150 kilo-litres per day distillery, which supplied 3.25 crore litres of ethanol to oil marketing companies in 2023-24, using B-heavy molasses and direct cane juice/syrup.

Thombare has further invested in bio-digesters for treating the liquid effluent (spent wash) from the distillery to produce about 60,000 cubic meters per day of raw biogas. This biogas, containing 60 per cent methane, is purified to over 95 per cent (by removing carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphide) for use as boiler fuel, generating another 1.5 megawatt of green power.

Another facility uses press-mud (another byproduct of sugar manufacture), along with napier grass and farm wastes, to produce 12,500 cubic meters/day of raw biogas that is then purified, compressed and stored

in cascades. This compressed biogas is sold as 'BioCNG' at Rs 80/kg.

"Ours is the first sugar mill in Maharashtra to produce BioCNG. We sell 3,500-4,000 kg daily through four outlets at Ranjani, Dharashiv, Latur and Parli (Beed)," says Thombare.

The Ranjani unit also has a submerged arc furnace plant to manufacture 10,000 tonnes per year of ferromanganese and silicomanganese alloys that are used in steel-making. "We installed it in 2005 to consume our surplus co-gen power that the Maharashtra state utility wasn't buying. Power constitutes 60-65 per cent of the production cost of ferroalloys," he explained.

As Thombare paved the way for private mills, others caught up.



Haritha with her husband Aneesh. Special Arrangement

Coimbatore. On September 27 that year, while her parents were in Coimbatore to fix the match, Haritha married Aneesh at a local temple. "We had previously decided that I should continue with my education and secure a government job. But when my parents tried to rush through with another proposal, we decided to get married," she says.

When they found out, Haritha's furious family filed a police complaint. The couple was summoned to the local police station,

where they were eventually told that they could live together. Though Haritha's family was warned against "harassing" them, she says trouble began right outside the police station, when her father threatened her saying the life of her *thali* (a sacred yellow thread worn by many South Indian brides to signify being married) "will be only for three months".

Their houses located just one km apart and sensing danger, the couple stayed with Aneesh's brother Arun in Alathur for a week.

The couple eventually returned to the house in Elamannam Aneesh shared with his parents and five other siblings. Back home, the couple assumed that Haritha's family would eventually accept her choice. What they didn't expect was how her family would murder her Aneesh.

"We didn't make plans to move away since all of Aneesh's family members were nearby. I thought one day my parents would welcome Aneesh into their lives," says Haritha.

On December 25 — the 90th day of the couple's marriage — Aneesh and his brother Arun had gone to a nearby junction for some errands. Arun had stopped for a soda and Aneesh was waiting on a two-wheeler outside a shop when Prabhukumar and Suresh arrived on their bikes and attacked him with the iron rods, dragging him to a nearby ditch.

When Arun tried to intervene, they threatened to beat him up too. Then, Suresh produced a knife and stabbed Aneesh multiple times, then fleeing with Prabhukumar. By the time some locals took him to a hospital, Aneesh had already died. According to the postmortem report, he had 19 fatal wounds.

Radha believes there could be another reason why Haritha's family disliked the relationship. "I had worked in the paddy field of Haritha's maternal uncle for many years. They might have thought my son marrying Haritha as an insult to them," she says.

According to Aneesh's oldest brother Anil, the couple continued to face threats throughout the brief marriage and even complained

to the police. "But no action was taken," he says.

For Haritha, going from her well-to-do concrete house to Aneesh's poorer home with no road access made for a significant change. The family has limited means, barely getting by with Arumughan's daily wage of Rs 750 from the painting projects he undertakes in Palakkad town.

But now, she appears to have found solace in her husband's family. The tragic death of her husband had affected a few exams, but she now plans to go on with her plans — finishing her BBA, clearing Public Service Commission exams and eventually securing an MBA — with her in-laws' support. "Aneesh's parents and his siblings take care of me very well. I don't feel anything lacking here," she says.

After Aneesh's murder, the state offered Haritha an ex-gratia compensation of Rs 10 lakh from the CM's distress relief fund. "I used that to buy three cents of land (approximately 1,306.67 sq. feet). I want to build a house. A job and a house are my dreams. I have already petitioned the government for a job," she says. Haritha hasn't been in touch with her family since the incident, even avoiding her husband's murder trial and going to court only when she was called for examination.

"At the court, I didn't even look at the faces of my father and uncle. I want the judiciary to give them a more severe punishment than life term and will petition the government to appeal against the trial court sentence. Because nobody should have to face this fate," she says.

BLUNT INSTRUMENT

Re-imposition of AFSPA in parts of Manipur could aggravate distrust. Centre and state must address political failures

IN THE 19 months since Manipur has been roiled by ethnic conflict, the state government's actions have been restricted to empty rhetoric, blaming outsiders, imposing internet bans and issuing vague promises of dialogue. The Centre's moves to bring the warring communities to the negotiating table too have not inspired confidence. Now, after a fresh spell of violence, the Union Home Ministry has reimposed the Disturbed Area status under the Armed Force Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in six police stations of the state. The area covered under the Act may not be large. However, given the history of opposition to AFSPA in Manipur — and other parts of the Northeast — the move could aggravate the atmosphere of distrust in the state.

Ethnic identities have always played an important role in the socioeconomic life of Manipur — they have influenced landownership patterns and shaped the contours of the state's political faultlines. The latest conflict began with a Meitei demand for ST status and a Kuki-Zomi pushback. The conflict has displaced people from both sides and taken a heavy toll of lives and livelihoods of people. Today, volunteers from both communities reportedly patrol villages as part of "defence committees". More than 5,000 weapons looted during the early months of the conflict remain missing. The police and the army have not been on the same page in how to deal with the warring groups. The problem also is that the state government continues to view the problem from the sole prism of law and order. Its blinkered outlook could compound the difficulties of the Armed Forces in the Northeast, at a time when neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh are embroiled in political turmoil.

AFSPA was first imposed in Manipur in 1958 in the Naga-dominated districts of Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul. In the 1960s, the Act was extended to the Kuki-Zomi-dominated Churachandpur district. The rest of the state came under its sway in 1979, when groups in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley began an armed insurgency. The sweeping powers it provides to the Armed Forces made the Act unpopular. In 2000, activist from Sharmila began a hunger strike against AFSPA that would continue for 16 years. In 2004, the then-UPA government set up a five-member committee under former Supreme Court Justice Jeevan Reddy. The Commission recommended the repeal of AFSPA a year later, describing the Act as "highly undesirable". The Second Administrative Reforms Commission endorsed these recommendations. In recent years, the Centre has been rolling back AFSPA from several parts of the Northeast. As Union Home Minister Amit Shah rightly pointed out in 2021, these moves have been guided by the decline of militancy in the region, fast-tracked by the government's development projects, Manipur, it appears, has been an outlier. Once amongst the most prosperous regions in the Northeast, the state now brings up the rear in most socioeconomic listings. It's imperative, therefore, that the Centre and state government address political and administrative failures, and not resort to blunt measures such as the restoration of AFSPA.

ANOTHER JOB SCAM

Alleged irregularities in job exam in UP will erode public trust. Probe must be conducted and accountability fixed

MINISTER'S NEPHEW; the son of the Legislative Council secretariat-in-charge; the son and daughter of the Department of Parliamentary Affairs-in-charge; the son of a Deputy Lokayukta. These are some of the candidates who were selected to fill administrative positions in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly and Legislative Council after at least two rounds of tests in 2020-21. An *Indian Express* investigation has revealed that a fifth of the 186 vacancies for which approximately 2.5 lakh people had applied went to relatives of officials, with at least five successful candidates connected to owners of the two private firms that had conducted the recruitment test. For young aspirants competing for the security and mobility afforded by a few hundred government jobs, these revelations would be further evidence of the odds being stacked against them.

As the Allahabad High Court observed on September 18, 2023, when hearing a plea by three unsuccessful candidates, the process is "not less than a recruitment scam". The CBI probe it ordered was stayed by the Supreme Court, following an appeal by the Legislative Council, with the next hearing scheduled for January 6, 2025. Delays will add to the anxiety and frustration of the youth, at a time when public trust in education and recruitment exams is already low. Earlier this year, controversies over irregularities in NEET and NET severely dented the credibility of the National Testing Agency, while an investigation by this newspaper in February revealed 41 documented instances of paper leaks in recruitment exams, across 15 states in five years, and affecting 1.4 crore job seekers. These instances, taken together, point to a deeper crisis that needs urgent attention. At a time when jobs that number in the mere hundreds attract lakhs of applications, it is all the more important that a level playing-field is ensured. When the integrity of such a system is compromised, as seen in the NEET-NET episode, it can be extremely dispiriting for young people, who have spent years preparing for an examination that they believe will change their lives for the better.

A probe into these irregularities must be conducted urgently, else the erosion of already diminishing public trust in the system will not be easy to overcome. Consider the protests this week against the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission's decision to conduct exams in different shifts and using a normalisation system for evaluation to obviate unfair advantage to candidates at any one shift. Applicants alleged that these complicated procedures would expand the scope for corruption of the process. Of course, the demand-supply mismatch is so large that it is open to constant exploitation. For a country hoping to reap the dividend of a large working-age population, expanding opportunities should be top priority.

FADING STRAINS

With the demise of Pandit Ram Narayan, the sarangi seems to have lost its glory days

WHEN SARANGI GIANT Pandit Ram Narayan, a rare musician who could coax magic out of one of India's oldest bow instruments, passed away last week in Mumbai at 96, the country lost a brilliant musician. The maestro's demise is also a cause for anxiety about the sarangi's future. There is no doubt that some of the younger artistes today — Sabir Khan, Kamal Sabri, Suhail Yusuf Khan and Murad Ali — who play regularly as accompanying musicians in Hindustani classical concerts are giving the sarangi its due and also inspiring others to take up the instrument. But the sarangi has been yielding in concerts to the harmonium — an extremely versatile instrument. Add to that, the difficulty of learning to play the sarangi.

A folk instrument, the sarangi evolved as an important accompaniment to the music of courtesans in the 18th and 19th centuries. The anti-naught movement, which marginalised these singer-performers, also degraded the status of sarangi players. The instrument was resurrected and put on a high pedestal by musicians such as Ram Narayan, Ustad Sultan Khan, and Ustad Sabri Khan. Before them, maestros such as Ustad Abdul Latif Khan and Bundu Khan played important roles in raising the sarangi's stock. It found status as a solo instrument — this status hangs somewhat in the balance after Ram Narayan's demise.

A glimpse into the sarangi's glory days comes to the fore in a grainy video of Abdul Latif Khan — a home *baithak*, where he plays while holding a cigarette and smoking it at regular intervals. After a particularly captivating glide of the instrument's strings, a patron takes bundles of cash and showers them over Khan. Such pomp harkens to an era, long lost. However, it will be tragic if the sound that mimics the human voice at its soulful best is lost.



ABHISHEK SINGHVI

HOW DO YOU judge a Chief Justice of India or, for that matter, any person in high office? The tests must be contextual to the job but, above all, if the overwhelming predominance of any person's work is good, praiseworthy and positive, the fact that he has, fractionally, committed errors, does not deserve a harsh verdict. It only shows that he, like us all, has no claim to divinity or infallibility. When eminent persons, within and without the Bar, use the 10 per cent test to chastise or condemn, they not only choose to ignore the 90 per cent glass full but do disservice both to the man and to the institution.

The recently retired CJI, usually referred to by his acronym DYC, firstly did what all judges, including CJIs, are supposed to do, but frequently do not. That is the dual activity of judging and writing judgments. Both as a puisne judge and as CJI, DYC has authored more nine, seven, five and three-judge judgments than any of his predecessors in the past two decades. Seminally vital issues were jurisprudentially addressed with high intellectual quality — not by mere numbers alone. They range from the nine-judge *Puttaswamy* privacy judgment to *Common Cause* on the right to die with dignity to *Shafin Jahan* on the right to marry freely to an expansion of abortion rights in *X vs NCT*. From striking down the criminality attached to same-sex consensual sex in *Navtej* to the recognition of queer couples' right to relationships to overruling his father not once but twice while decriminalising adultery and negating the infamous *ADM Jabalpur*, DYC has painted with a broad brush. Federalism issues, from the five-judge decision in the NCT case to the very recent nine-judge decision in *States versus Centre mining rights*, have coexisted with his judgments on religious issues like Sabarimala and Ayodhya as also the Electoral Bonds case.

Merits apart, to wield the pen (actually the computer) with such dexterity has not been seen since the 1960s and '70s. If judging and writing judgments, and writing them well, is the primary test for a judge (something too easily forgotten), no fair view can say that DYC has not passed it with flying colours. We all

DY Chandrachud's tenure as CJI was almost without blemish. It should be celebrated, not denigrated

Merits apart, to wield the pen (actually the computer) with such dexterity has not been seen since the 1960s and '70s. If judging and writing judgments, and writing them well, is the primary test for a judge (something too easily forgotten), no fair view can say that DYC has not passed it with flying colours. We all know judges who do not write judgments. This one has spanned the diversity of federalism and democratic governance, equality, liberty, gender, disability, free speech and commercial issues, apart from significant dissents (as in the Aadhaar case), with consummate ease in his judicial writings.

know judges who do not write judgments. This one has spanned the diversity of federalism and democratic governance, equality, liberty, gender, disability, free speech and commercial issues, apart from significant dissents (as in the Aadhaar case), with consummate ease in his judicial writings.

That he has been able to do it while being on the lecture circuit, speaking across the country on diverse issues, dealing with myriad administrative and management issues of the Supreme Court is testimony to his unprecedented industry and diligence, reinforced by a lifetime of discipline. It is reflected in his self-confessed musings on being a lark (and not an owl), yoga, alternative medicine, diet restraint of a high order and meditation. It is this humongous industry which has let him leave a mark on so many issues.

Thirdly, no CJI has done so much for infrastructure and technology. Accessibility issues, so much in sync with his passion for facilitation of the differently abled, staff training and exam centres, staff library, a national judicial museum, archives, the beautification of the lawns, the new enclosed spaces with air-conditioning, renovation of courtrooms and bar rooms, media enclosures, crèche facilities, the new cafe by the differently abled, all sit majestically with his most important contribution — the institutionalisation of virtual hearings in most courts and tribunals across India, despite resistance. The use of avant garde technology and AI has yielded a huge number of translated judgments in Hindi and regional languages, a more efficient national judicial grid linking all courts from the lowest to the highest across India. Again, many of these achievements are statistical, even boring, and are continuous journeues not destinations, but he does shine on all these fronts by contrast.

Fourthly, his conduct of proceedings inside courtrooms has been almost blemishless — no mean achievement amidst strong provocations and the vicissitudes of high-profile cases and sometimes irritating trivialities. He has been polite, courteous and considerate, yet firm and decisive. Hardly any advocate, irrespective of seniority, has gone back

feeling that he/she has not been heard or that his/her point is not appreciated. The presence of such qualities, in earlier eras taken for granted, are now remembered frequently in the breach amidst the pressures of modern day, over-congested judging.

There is no doubt that he could have avoided both the "PM at home" episode as also the pre-Ayodhya decision comment. It has led to a lot of snide remarks in the last days of an illustrious career. But it would be wrong to ascribe a motivated plan of action to what I think is at best an error of judgement. Contextually, the second comment is understandable, though may not be justifiable, coming as it did amidst small children in his own village's school, who were chatting informally about all and sundry with the illustrious son of their village. The PM episode leaves him open to all kinds of misinterpretations and was best avoided. That DYC continued to explain or justify these episodes in his later retirement-eve interviews was a third error of judgement.

Equally blameworthy may be the decision not to decide the Shiv Sena/NCP disqualification cases as also the NCT vs LG constitutional cases. He listed them time and again, never refused to hear them but allowed time to run out under his watch. The NCT example was even more inexplicable because two earlier judgments, both by DYC himself, had decided and clarified the issue in great detail, leading to the new NCT parliamentary amendment by the Modi government. There was no one more familiar with the subject than him in the SC to decide the issue expeditiously.

In the end, I have no hesitation in saying that all these shortcomings fall well within the 10 per cent rule, neither besmirching nor eroding nor erasing his spectacular achievements and lasting legacy.

The writer is fourth term MP, jurist, former Chair, Parliamentary Standing Committees on Commerce, Law & Home; Member, Congress Working Committee; former Additional Solicitor General; senior National Spokesperson, Congress; Chair, Cong Department on Law, Human Rights & RTI and author



SHUBHRA GUPTA

SOME FILMS BECOME cult for the right reasons. That they were hidden gems, unappreciated for their plots and performances. That they had zeroed in on the high and low notes of the times they were set in. That they were lost in the slew of surrounding films, and "*paarkhi darkshaks* in later *dashaks*" gathered them up in fervent embrace.

And some films are like *Andaz Apna Apna* (AAA), written and directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, starring Aamir Khan and Salman Khan, the two clean-cut legacy star kids who had hit the movies right at the end of the dreadful '80s and become overnight sensations. Despite its starry wattage — with Raveena Tandon and Karisma Kapoor playing the female leads, along with a whole bunch of popular comic actors — the film disappeared without having let off any noticeable firecrackers. It's only much later that it was dusted off, and appropriated: Thirty years on (the film released in early November 1994), it is truly baffling why it is such a darling amongst those who worship at its altar.

I watched it again after all those years, and of course it hasn't aged well — it's determinedly mid qualities are even more glaring. It feels like it was assembled as it went along, the way so many Hindi films used to be, back in the day. The lads and lassies, the former in colourful shirts and mullets which switch lengths, continuity be damned, and the latter in bright orange and pink lipsticks and big hair, jump about Ooty's hillsides. The villains show up as and when, in and out of their den.

What struck me most, all over again, was

ANTI-CLASSIST AND CHEERFUL

If there's an ode to silly, it has to be 'Andaz Apna Apna'

This is very much a 1994 film, presenting a time of idealised innocence, teetering on the brink of a just-liberalised India, when two callow gold diggers who had clearly never seen the inside of a gym, and whose six packs were well into the future, could make you believe that they were really after, what else, 'sachcha pyaar'.

its anti-classist cheap-and-cheerful aesthetic. Everyone in the film exists to tell us that regardless of the exigencies of the thing that passes for a plot — heiresses looking for true love, layabouts in search of purpose, look-alikes switching identities, and a bag of diamonds — all will end well. That happiness is just around the corner. And most importantly, nothing matters as much as silliness: If there's an ode to silly, it is *Andaz Apna Apna*. When you can celebrate silliness, life is still worth living.

The '90s was a decade when movies were in recovery mode. Except for a handful of films, with home entertainment having nearly steamrolled theatrical outings, Hindi cinema had sunk from B grade to C. The back-to-back success of two youthful romances — Aamir's *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) and Salman's *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) — brought the "gen-try", and optimism, back to the movies.

Santoshi himself was coming off the success of serious dramas like *Ghayal* (1990) and *Damini* (1993), and was looking to make a "light" film: *Andaz Apna Apna* felt like such a 360 degree turnaround that it was hard to believe that it was from the same director who had made movies toplining the hard-knocks-hero-and-heroine and their grim struggle to stay afloat.

There is nothing grim about AAA. It spreads only grins. Yes, you can groan, like I did, at the non-stop carousel of lame jokes — Salman revealing an ability to carry a line lightly, even more so than Aamir, even though both played well with each other — but you can't help cracking up in some places. How

else to react when Shakti Kapoor, immortalised as Crime Master Gogo, the nephew of the legendary Mogambo (one of the endless hat-tips to beloved filmi characters), leaps out from behind yet another bush, his patently false moustache straggling off a lip? Paresh Rawal who may have invented the serio-comic baddie in Bollywood has a double role, and his yearning-for-riches Teja remains a rumbled classic.

I did feel distinctly uncomfortable at Aamir's Amar falling all over Raveena's Raveena in a few songs-and-sequences (a most a precursor to the 1995 *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* with Shah Rukh Khan doing ditto with Kajol in the back of a Eurail compartment), but again that is a post-facto insight. Thirty years ago, as in the previous decades, heroes and heroines were routinely bracketed in ways which would be considered strictly off-limits these days.

Which is really the thing — this is very much a 1994 film, presenting a time of idealised innocence, teetering on the brink of a just-liberalised India, when two callow gold diggers who had clearly never seen the inside of a gym, and whose six packs were well into the future, could make you believe that they were really after, what else, *sachcha pyaar*.

Finally, it is all about the candyfloss nostalgia of a bygone era when you could happily wallow in the nonsense surrounding those markers of unserious menace, Mark and Teja. And in the belief that Amar and Prem were forever.

shubhra.gupta@expressindia.com

NOVEMBER 16, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

MRS GANDHI'S ASSASSIN

POLICE INVESTIGATORS REPORT that a senior officer ordered the shooting of Indira Gandhi's assassins after their surrender. Surviving assassin Satwant Singh claims guards fired without provocation. This contradicts earlier police statements that the assassins were shot while resisting commandos. Evidence shows they were shot in the guard room ten minutes post-surrender.

TERRORISTS ESCAPE

SEVEN TERRORISTS FREED four colleagues from police custody, killing one bus passen-

ger and injuring two police escorts near Faridkot district in Punjab. The incident occurred while the arrested terrorists were returning from court to jail. The terrorists also seized ammunition from injured policemen. The freed terrorists were identified as Sukhdev Singh and Kulwant Singh. Just four policemen — three constables and one head constable — were put on duty for as many terrorists

TAMIL NADU POLLS

THE TAMIL NADU Governor, SL Khurana, dissolved the State Assembly on the recommendation of the Council of ministers. The Finance Minister met the governor on

November 14 to convey the Council's decision, seeking a fresh mandate from people for implementing socialistic and secular programmes alongside parliamentary elections.

BJP'S VISION

THE BJP'S NATIONAL executive called for "a new polity, new government and new leadership" in the country. In a resolution passed at their concluding session, the party committed to value-based politics, democracy and positive secularism. The resolution emphasised the need for a government that represents the country's diversity and restores the state's moral authority.

THE IDEAS PAGE

My two Indias

The country I was born in will, sadly, not be one in which I will die. I was told to ‘go back to Portugal’. This toxicity is symptomatic of mindsets that have grown across families and WhatsApp groups



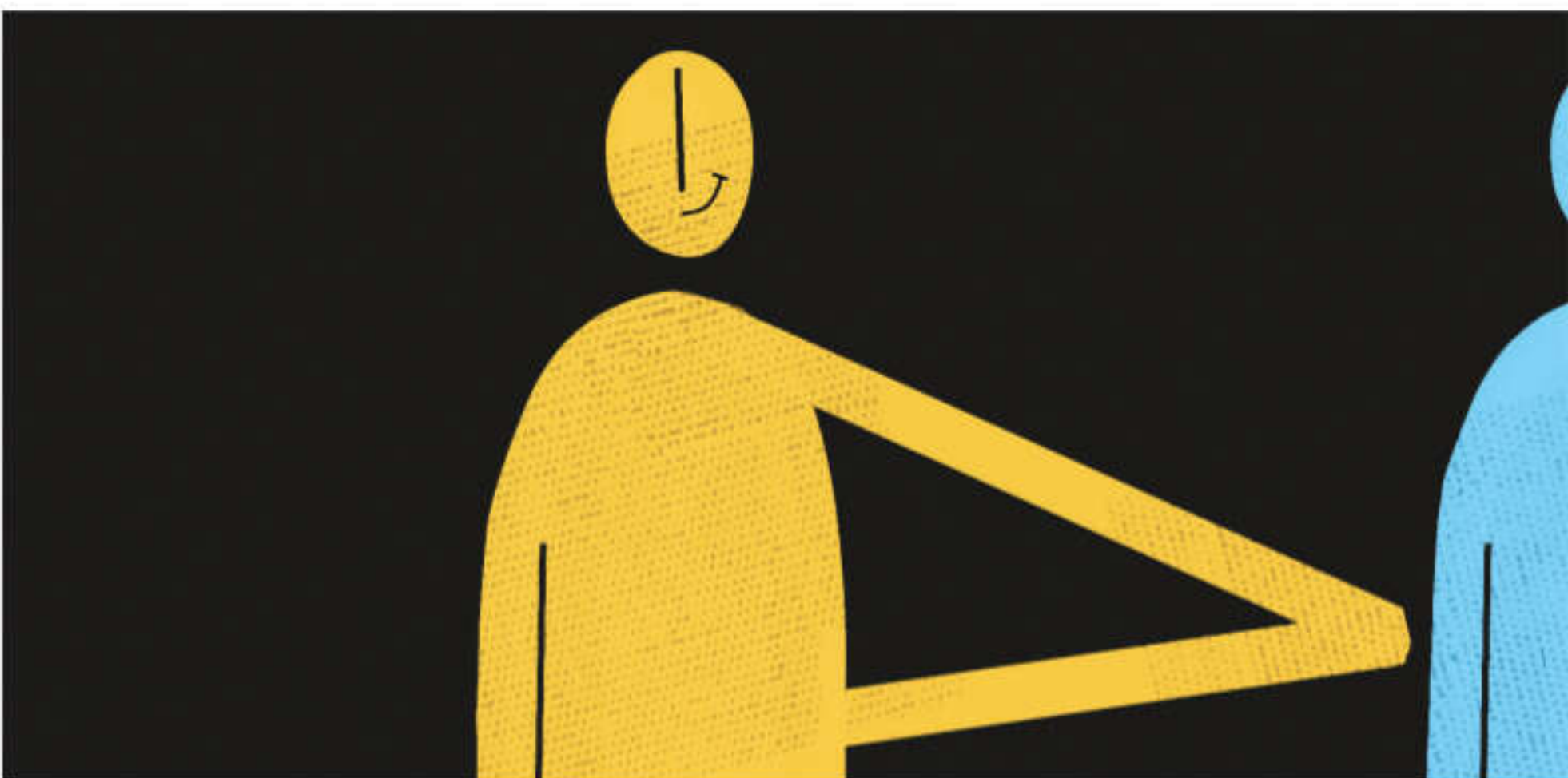
PETER RONALD DESOUSA

THE STORIES OF discussions taking place in Resident Welfare Association (RWA) chat groups, University Alumni gatherings, the Officer’s mess, and even in IIT Whatsapp groups — where the scientific temper is supposedly pervasive — of members being trolled because of their religion and ethnicity, I only half regarded as serious. These to me were passing moments of toxicity. Essential India with its philosophical openness would re-emerge from such cesspools of prejudice. I have now learnt that I am mistaken. The poison has gone very deep. It has entered the groundwater of our national soul.

A few days ago, during an argument, I was told to “go back to Portugal”. Not one to take such abuse without a fight I responded and asked my adversary to “go back to Afghanistan”. He was outraged. “I’m not from Afghanistan,” he roared”. “Well, I’m not from Portugal,” I said. Two things come together in this brief exchange that are worth thinking about. My name and his outrage. For him I was obviously the outsider and, equally obviously, he was the insider. Both for him were self-evidently true. In this exchange, my argumentativeness faced his righteous anger. He said he was confronting me because I was evil. That we went to school together more than half a century ago did not matter.

I narrate this story because I must honestly admit I was surprised at the vitriol. There was more abuse directed at me but I ignored it. His educational and professional journey seemed to have had little tempering effect on his views, not just as an adult but as a retired senior. What began as a discussion on an Indian festival, soon descended into a toxic spat watched by others who, in their silence, appeared to endorse his views that it was inadmissible for me to talk about things Indian, especially Indian culture. What did I know? And who was I anyway? An Indian on probation! Now I know what Draupadi must have felt in the assembly when she asked the custodians of *dharma* her question. They did not answer. They remained silent. It is unclear to me if they looked down in embarrassment, but Sanskrit pandits tell me that they did not. Which only makes it worse!

Curiously, we were both defending the same thing, *bharatiya sanskruti*. He was doing it from a worldview constructed after listening to hours of lectures at Hindutva university. An alternative view comes from analysing the exchanges in the Constituent Assembly. When one reads the interventions of illustrious Indians such as Rajkumari Amrit Kaul, KM Munshi, N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Jerome D’Souza, Maulana Azad, S Radhakrishnan, and of course B R Ambedkar, and others, it is clear that in the India they imagined both of us are equally insiders. The word “equally” is crucial here since what was being given to us, when we adopted the Constitution, was equal citizenship. That is under threat today. My story is only a pointer to the challenge ahead. I must admit that in my naivete I was unprepared



CR Sasikumar

for the ferocity of the onslaught. The language of “us vs them” has clearly taken root among educated middle-class Indians.

As I narrate this story, I’m not sure if it is an admission of defeat. As one who has spent more than 40 years as an educationist believing in the promise that we were building rational minds and a rational public sphere, the experience of both vituperation and silence surprised and saddened me. It was as good a laboratory experiment as one can get in the social sciences, all things being constant. Members who were a part of the group were educated in a public school and later in a public university. They worked in secular organisations both national and international. They held club memberships and played the occasional game of golf. They even enjoyed whiskey on the rocks. But views from Hindutva university had begun to dominate their perception of the world.

If my story is unique to me then it need not go any further. But I believe it is symptomatic of the mindsets that have grown not just across the country but also in families and neighbourhoods. My experience the other day dispelled the illusion that I had harboured, as a political scientist, that this toxicity was only temporary, that India’s fabled hospitality (our welcome to the Parsis and the Jews) was deeper than the surface poison.

And this is where my anxiety lies. I firmly believe (or believed) that the only way to build a strong nation is to make it a nation of people, to nurture its diversity, based on the imagination crafted in the Constituent Assembly. It would not be easy. Ambedkar warned us that we would be entering a world of contradictions. Contradictions are good. They enable new resolutions that can lead to exciting new outcomes. Like our cricket team. This will, however, not happen if the more powerful among us impose their viewpoints on others, maligning them as anti-national. I believe that this demonising that is being encouraged is not the way to build a future India. But maybe I’m wrong.

I see such “poisonous othering” pervading our opinion-forming institutions. In addition to the media, we find this attitude of constructing the “hostile other” being formulated in NCERT textbooks, university curricula, ICHR research projects, and of course,

Curiously, we were both defending the same thing, ‘bharatiya sanskruti’. He was doing it from a worldview constructed after listening to hours of lectures at Hindutva university. An alternative view comes from analysing the exchanges in the Constituent Assembly. When one reads the interventions of illustrious Indians such as Rajkumari Amrit Kaul, KM Munshi, N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Jerome D’Souza, Maulana Azad, S Radhakrishnan, and of course B R Ambedkar, and others, it is clear that in the India they imagined both of us are equally insiders.

WhatsApp groups. Minds are being infected. The “other” is being vilified. Although this has been said many times before, I bring it up again not because of my recent experience but because of the silence of the majority who watched the exchanges as if it were a theatre performance. The silent majority will, through their silence, become colluders in this venomous new India.

This bothers me as a *desi*. But what bothers me more is the impossibility of this Hindutva project. India, I believe, cannot be built on the idea of majoritarianism, as Hindu supremacy. Its fundamental diversity will break out of this forced and imposed uniformity. Our civilisational history shows this to be the case. It will not permit such uniformity. Astika and Nastika philosophical systems, each with their own warring groups, cannot be reconciled. Nor can the Zaidi school of law in Shia Islam agree with the Hanafi school in Sunni Islam. Even within our small Parsi community, there are grumbings against the rulings of the Parsi panchayat. And even God, I’m told, does not know how many Christian groups there are in India. The Constituent Assembly recognised such diversity and constructed an institutional and legal edifice to accommodate it. We had embarked upon the greatest experiment in human history, of making a plural nation of equal citizens. It was unparalleled in its ambition. But this has been stalled by Hindutva. It is being dismantled. It appears to be succeeding.

Maybe I am wrong. Maybe it is possible to build a majoritarian nation even in the face of the challenges of modernity. According to the IMF, we are not doing too badly. Hindutva may be able to build a modern, technological, economically successful, and supremacist nation. They will find ways to dance to Diljit Dosanjh’s hip-hop while also crushing Valentine’s Day celebrations. The majority will be silent. The toxicity has spread. Paraphrasing Ambedkar one thing is certain: The India in which I was born will, sadly, not be the India in which I am going to die.

The writer is an independent scholar and co-editor with Rukmini Bhaya Nair of Keywords for India: A Conceptual Lexicon for the 21st century

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“[PTI] has seemed quite rudderless and impatient for instant gratification of its demands. Its mercurial support base does not really help: Without discipline from within, the PTI cannot expect to achieve much.”

— DAWN, PAKISTAN

What we burn is what pollutes

Acknowledging the true scale and sources of our pollution crisis is the first step toward meaningful action



CHANDRA BHUSHAN

A QUARTER-CENTURY AGO, over 200 scientists from the US, Europe, the Maldives, and India came together to study the haze over the Indian Ocean. Led by atmospheric scientist V Ramanathan of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California, the Indian Ocean Experiment (INDOEX) undertook intensive field observations using aircraft, ships, surface stations, and satellites. They discovered a giant brown layer of cloud hanging over much of the Indian Subcontinent and the Indian Ocean between October and February, which they termed the Indian Ocean Brown Cloud or Asian Brown Cloud. INDOEX revealed that this layer was primarily created by the burning of biomass in fields and homes, as well as fossil fuels like coal in industries, and that it traveled thousands of kilometres. The study also found that the haze significantly affected regional temperatures, precipitation patterns, and ground-level pollution, reducing agricultural productivity and causing widespread respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

When the UN Environment Programme published the INDOEX report in 2002, some prominent Indian scientists called it sensationalist and argued that the “Indian Ocean” or “Asian” Brown Cloud was not unique to India or Asia and should, therefore, be renamed. Because of their opposition, the name was changed to “Atmospheric Brown Cloud with a Focus on Asia”. Governments in South Asia ignored the report.

This episode underscores two key points: First, the causes of air pollution have been known for at least 25 years and second, we have been avoiding the issue for just as long. By injecting ideology and politics into what should be a straightforward matter, we continue to muddy the waters. Debates over rich versus poor, farmers versus city-dwellers, SUVs versus cook stoves, and Diwali versus stubble burning have stalled real action.

The result of this obfuscation is that today, from Amritsar in Punjab to Agartala in Tripura, an arc of brown haze, up to 3 km thick, has engulfed the Indo-Gangetic plains (IGP), impacting lives, livelihoods, and the economy. While pollution levels are severe in the IGP, air quality is poor across the country. Most Indian cities fail to meet national ambient air quality standards, which are quite lenient compared to WHO’s health-based guidelines. The primary cause of this pollution remains the same as what Ramanathan and his colleagues identified 25 years ago.

In a study conducted by my colleagues and me in 2023, we estimated that India emits about 52 lakh tonnes of PM_{2.5} (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in size, which has high health impacts) annually, excluding dust from natural and manmade sources. Around 48 per cent of these emissions come from biomass use — such as agricultural residue, fuelwood, and dung cakes — for cooking and heating in homes. Stubble burning contributes an additional 6.5 per cent, making biomass burning responsible for 55 per cent

of total PM_{2.5} emissions. Industry and power plants are the second-largest emitters, contributing about 37 per cent, primarily from coal burning. The transport sector, a major focus of air pollution mitigation, contributes about 7 per cent of the emissions, while the remainder comes from sources such as open garbage burning. These findings are not surprising if we follow the dictum: What we burn the most, pollutes the most. In India, we burn about 220 crore tonnes of fuel and waste. Of this, 85 per cent is coal and biomass, while 15 per cent comprises other fuels such as petrol, diesel, and natural gas. Naturally, most of our pollution is due to burning biomass and coal. Additionally, dust from roads, construction sites, and barren land contributes to particulate pollution, especially PM₁₀.

To address air pollution decisively, we must follow a scientific approach, and move beyond optics like odd-even, construction bans and artificial rain, and instead focus on the real solution — energy transition. Shifting households to LPG, biogas, or electricity for cooking and heating will eliminate a significant proportion of PM_{2.5} emissions. It will also prevent 8,00,000 premature deaths, caused by exposure to PM_{2.5} inside homes. Though challenging, this is achievable through targeted policy initiatives like a new PM Ujjwala Yojana that provides sufficient incentives to encourage low-income households to move away from traditional biomass.

Similarly, energy transition in industry, especially in MSMEs, along with rigorous monitoring and enforcement, is necessary to reduce pollution. A programme encouraging MSMEs to adopt cleaner fuel and technologies, such as electric boilers and furnaces, could curb emissions significantly. Law enforcement of stringent pollution norms is a basic necessity for larger industries and thermal power plants. For that, the modernisation of pollution control boards is urgently required.

On the other hand, eliminating stubble burning is essential to decrease severe and hazardous pollution days in October and November. Technological interventions along with incentives/ disincentives can solve this problem. The simplest technological solution is to modify or mandate combine harvesters that cut closer to the ground, like manual harvesting, leaving minimal stubble behind. Additionally, an incentive of Rs 1,000 per acre — similar to what the Haryana government provides — could encourage sustainable stubble management, along with fines and exclusion from government schemes for those who continue to burn.

As far as automobiles are concerned, scaling up electric vehicles and public transport is crucial. This will need clear targets for EV adoption and the promotion of public transport as a lifestyle choice. Lastly, to reduce local sources of pollution — dust from roads and construction, garbage burning, and traffic congestion — local bodies must be strengthened and held accountable.

Real progress will only begin once we accept the science. Acknowledging the true impact and sources of our pollution crisis is the first step toward meaningful action.

The writer is CEO, International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST)



RAM RAJYA
BY RAM MADHAV

Don’t cry over Article 370

J&K Assembly resolution on restoration of special status is futile, duplicitous

THERE WAS A futile *tamasha* in the Jammu and Kashmir legislature last week in the name of passing a resolution on the restoration of special status. Without directly referring to Article 370, the resolution demanded the restoration of the “special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture, and rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir”. If anyone harboured doubt as to whether it referred to the Articles 370 and 35A, abrogated five years ago, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah laid them to rest by explaining the “special status” in his maiden address: “We have lost a lot in the last six years. When I was last in this House, we were a State, we had our own Constitution, and our flag. But all of that was taken away from us.”

Resolutions of this nature don’t have any constitutional validity. Sometimes, they acquire sanctity because they express the solidarity of the nation. On February 22, 1994, both Houses of the Indian Parliament unanimously passed a resolution on J&K, demanding that Pakistan must vacate the areas in that state that it occupied “through aggression”. It was hailed as the expression of “national resolve”. On the contrary, the resolution that the UT legislature passed on November 6 was a hogwash. What sanctity would such a resolution have, which was hurriedly pushed through a voice vote amidst strong opposition from the BJP? The resolution can at the most be described as the deception by the “Gupkar Group”.

The history of Article 370 demonstrates the deceptive politics practised by both Congress and National Conference in the last seven decades. For example, they repeatedly lie to the people that Article 370 granted “special status”. Where did that phrase come from? In fact, when Sheikh Abdullah approached B R Ambedkar for special status for J&K, the latter firmly rejected saying that “making limited application of laws made by Parliament for the state of Jammu and Kashmir would create lots of problems rather than solving.” The Article was finally inserted in the Indian Constitution only as “Temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir”. Nowhere did the Constitution describe it as “special status”.

As regards the so-called “constitutional guarantees”, the Article was subjected to major amendments at least on four occasions — in 1954, 1966, 1975 and 1986 — taking away whatever temporary powers the state enjoyed courtesy of the infamous Delhi Agreement of 1952. It must be remembered that it was the Congress that was in power on all these occasions.

During Jawaharlal Nehru’s tenure, demand for the repeal of Article 370 was raised in Parliament several times. India’s first spy chief, B N Mullik, claimed that in a private conversation, Nehru made the extraordinary admission that India “agreed with the Jana Sangh’s views that Jammu & Kashmir should be fully integrated with India and

was taking steps in that direction”. In Parliament, in an oral reply, he said that Article 370 had been “eroded and Kashmir stands fully integrated”.

When Prakash Vir Shastri, a Jana Sangh member, moved a Private Member’s Bill in Parliament in 1964 on Article 370, it received wide support. Abdul Ghani Goni from J&K, a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah’s, delivered an aggressive speech stating that the then Prime Minister of J&K, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, had moved for abrogation of Article 370, but the central government was not agreeable to it at that time. “I do not know whether the Central Government is under the influence of the West or wants appeasement policy towards Pakistan... they want to please their neighbours at our cost. The people of Kashmir had decided once and for all that Kashmir is an integral part of India, whether there is Article 370 or no Article 370. It is only a provisional and temporary provision which can be removed at any time,” he said, appealing to the Congress members for support to the bill “so that we may also be treated as equal citizens, as good citizens of India as any other citizen. Don’t treat us as second-class citizens, and don’t treat us as a colony of India. We are as much a part of India as other states.”

Syed Nasir Husain Samnani, another member from that state, rose to make a passionate speech, saying, “We, the people of Kashmir, never demanded that we should be treated differently. We do not want Article

370. I want to end this curse in my lifetime, for my safety, for my children’s safety, for the safety of our future generations. We should have the same laws as Maharashtra, Madras, Kerala, Bengal.”

The reality is that by the time of its neutralisation in 2019, the Article was largely hollowed out by the Congress party under popular pressure, while the NC supported it tacitly by looking the other way. But Congress lacked the courage and political will to remove the Article. Displaying that courage, the BJP government did away with the vestiges of it for two reasons. First, it was being used by Gupkar leaders to create a false sense of “special status” and an emotional wedge between the people of Kashmir and the rest of the country. Second, the namesake separate state constitution that existed was creating hurdles in running the administration. For example, while J&K acceded to the GST law, it continued to levy state taxes also, a double whammy on its people, because there was no provision to amend the state constitution.

It is clear that the ending of the 370 regime gave great relief to the people of the UT. But the NC and Congress, known for their duplicity of stating one thing in Delhi and the opposite in Kashmir, are again displaying their mastery over the politics of deception. They know very well that Article 370 is dead, “long live Article 370”.

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FALL IN SENSEX

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘A correction’ (IE, November 15). The fall in the BSE Sensex can be attributed to the slow momentum in the domestic economy. Rural demand has also plummeted substantially. China has again become an attractive destination for FDI, owing to the government’s recent economic policies. The US is expected to change its economic policies under the Trump administration. It remains to be seen whether Trump will bring about substantial tariff changes, as these would affect India’s trade policies and the stock market’s performance. Domestic retail investors are hoping for better returns, as they believe that the Indian economy will show dynamism and resilience.

Atul Thakre, Nagpur

SMOG WINTER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Severe air again’ (IE, November 15). As winter sets in, Delhi again confronts an extreme pollution crisis. The seasonal smog has rendered the capital’s air quality “hazardous”, driving pollution levels to among the highest globally. Reduced visibility, grounded flights and indoor confinement warnings reflect an emergency

affecting millions. Although natural factors contribute, human activities — vehicle emissions, industrial discharge and stubble burning — remain the primary causes. Each winter’s predictable haze reflects systemic failures in air quality management. The situation demands comprehensive, preventive solutions targeting root causes.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

SPORTS AND BORDERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Cricket & violence don’t go together’ (IE, November 15). Matches between the two nations are among the most watched sporting events globally, with fans passionately supporting their teams. However, the spirit of cricket has been overshadowed by political tensions that complicate India-Pakistan ties and threaten regional stability. The ripple effects of this tense dynamic affect players and fans, who often carry political discord into what should be friendly competition. This has led to verbal abuse and social media conflicts, creating a hostile atmosphere and restricting matches to international tournaments like the World Cup or Asia Cup. To honour cricket’s spirit, both nations must foster respect and sportsmanship.

Siddhant Pathak, New Delhi

TOP OF THE WORLD



Prince Harry

UNITED KINGDOM
Suit against Murdoch's UK group moves towards trial

London: Prince Harry will pursue his lawsuit against Rupert Murdoch's News Group Newspapers over alleged unlawful activities by journalists and private investigators despite dozens of others settling their cases, his lawyer said on Friday. Harry, 40, the younger son of King Charles, is suing the publisher of the Sun and the now-defunct News of the World at the High Court in London, alleging NGN unlawfully obtained private information about him from 1996 until 2011. His case was one of about 40 lawsuits against NGN, but all but one other litigant – former Labour Party deputy leader Tom Watson – have now settled, Harry's lawyer told the court. **REUTERS**

UNITED KINGDOM
Downing Street apologises for menu 'mistake'

London: Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office on Friday apologised for a "mistake" in the organisation of its Diwali reception at 10 Downing Street after some British Hindus objected to non-vegetarian food and alcohol being served at the gathering. While the statement did not make a direct reference to the menu, a spokesperson for Starmer's office said the team acknowledged the strength of feeling on the issue and assured the community that it would not be repeated. **PTI**

PERU
Xi Jinping opens huge port funded by China

Lima: Chinese President Xi Jinping launched a week-long diplomatic blitz of South America on Thursday by inaugurating a massive deep-water port in Peru, a \$1.3 billion investment by Beijing as it seeks to expand trade and influence on the continent. With China's demand for agricultural goods and metals from Latin America growing, Xi will participate in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Lima then head to the Group of 20 summit in Rio de Janeiro next week, where he will also make a state visit to Brazil. Xi and Peruvian President Dina Boluarte participated on Thursday by video link in the opening of the Chancay port, about 80 m north of Lima on the Pacific Ocean. **AP**

SPAIN
Fire at nursing home kills 10

Madrid: At least 10 people died and others were injured in a blaze at a nursing home near Zaragoza, Spain, before firefighters managed to extinguish the flames. The alarm was raised early Friday morning in Villafraanca de Ebro, about 28 kilometres from the northeastern city. Two people remained in critical condition, officials said. The cause of the fire was not yet known, local media reported. **AP**

FROM 3 SEATS TO 159 IN 225-STRONG HOUSE

Sri Lankan President's Left coalition wins two-thirds majority in Parliament

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, NOVEMBER 15

SRI LANKAN President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power (NPP) clinched a commanding two-thirds majority in the country's Parliament on Friday in a victory that marks the first time a once-fringe coalition has risen to dominate Sri Lanka's legislature under the proportional representation system.

The NPP, a coalition of over 20 parties led by the Leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), won 159 of the 225 seats in Sri Lanka's Parliament. This comes close on the heels of Dissanayake's decisive presidential win in September, cementing his coalition's transformation from a marginal political force to a dominant player in the South Asian island nation.

The NPP's win is not just remarkable for its scale, but for its breadth. In a historic first, a coalition led by a predominantly Sinhala-Buddhist party secured three of six seats in Jaffna, a Tamil-majority district long dominated by Tamil nationalist parties. Such an outcome would have been historically unthinkable, signalling a seismic shift in ethnic politics, too.

The coalition's success shows its evolving appeal as a unifying force in a country fractured by decades of ethnic strife. The NPP's ability to gain traction in the north and east, home to Sri Lanka's Tamil and Muslim minorities, reflects years of targeted outreach and an electoral strategy emphasising economic justice over ethnic nationalism.

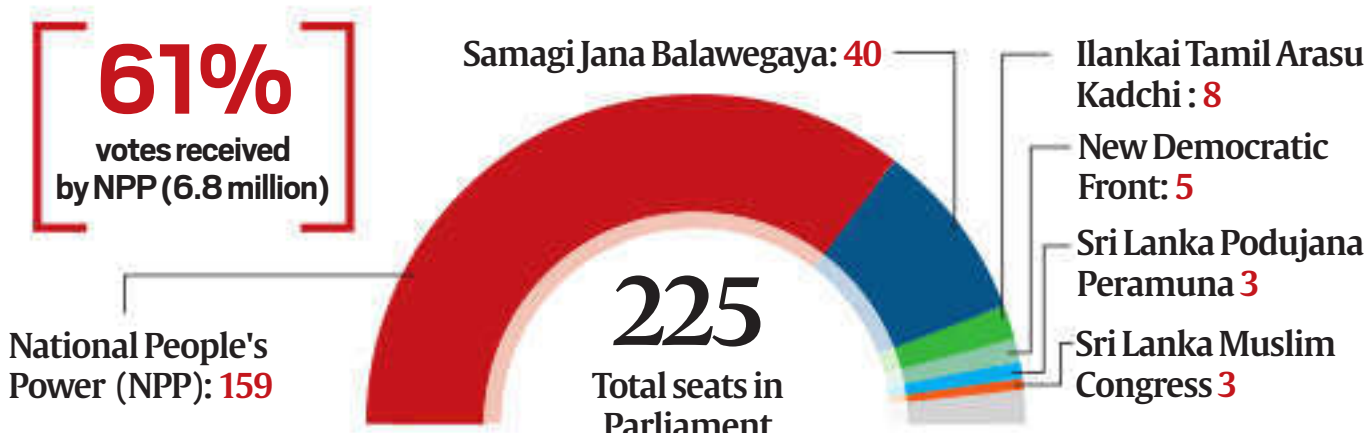
During his campaign, Dissanayake repeatedly pledged to dismantle divisive political culture and assured the fulfilment of the promise of returning military-occupied lands to Tamils in the north. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, the NPP held just three seats, compared to its 159 in 2024. On Friday, NPP secured nearly 62% of the vote, translating to over 6.8 million votes – a significant increase from the 42% that Dissanayake garnered in the presidential election just two months earlier.

Traditional political power-



Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in Colombo on Thursday. *Reuters*

How the new Parliament looks



RAJAPAKSA FAMILY'S PARTY 'WIPE OUT'

Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party of the Rajapaksa family, whose cohort of brothers gave Sri Lanka two presidents during a dozen years in power and had 145 seats in the outgoing legislature, was virtually wiped out, winning just three seats

NPP MAKES HISTORY IN TAMIL-DOMINATED JAFFNA

NPP made history in the Jaffna electoral district as it trounced traditional Tamil nationalist parties. The NPP won over 80,000 votes in the district, outperforming ITAK's 63,000 votes. Three seats in district went to NPP, and ITAK, ACTC one each.

houses were decimated in the elections. The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family was reduced to just three seats, and the United National Party (UNP) managed only one.

The Samaghi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), led by Sajith Premadasa, retained its position as the main Opposition party with 40 seats.

In Jaffna, where the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK) has long held sway, the NPP's victory was

particularly symbolic. The party's emphasis on economic rights over ethnic identities seem to have been effective with disillusioned voters still struggling to come out of the hardships in the aftermath of the war that ended 15 years ago.

EXPLAINED Tough test ahead for him

FOR DISSANAYAKE, the parliamentary victory is both a validation and a test. With a two-thirds majority, the NPP has the legislative power to pursue its ambitious agenda, including the abolition of the executive presidency – a longstanding demand of civil society. However, there are also critics in Colombo who feel that the coalition's inexperience in governance could hinder its ability to deliver. The coalition must also navigate international scrutiny, particularly over its handling of Tamil political prisoners – a contentious issue that has drawn the attention of human rights groups.

While the International Monetary Fund's \$2.9-billion rescue package has stabilised the economy, Sri Lanka remains precariously poised. Inflation, unemployment, and a high cost of living continue to plague millions of Sri Lankans. Dissanayake has promised to renegotiate some IMF conditions to free up resources for welfare programmes, a move analysts warn could jeopardise future disbursements.

While "a widespread anger, mistrust and contempt" towards the Rajapaksa family as well as the UNP and SJB are seen as the reason for the NPP's unprecedented victory.

The JVP, a Leftist movement with a history of violent uprisings and staunch opposition to Tamil autonomy, has over the years shed its militant image, rebranding itself as a champion of workers' rights, anti-corruption, and progressive governance.

Sri Lanka is still recovering from its worst economic crisis since Independence, triggered by a sovereign default in 2022 and a subsequent bailout from the IMF.



Robert F Kennedy Jr during 'America First Policy Institute' gala at Trump's estate in Palm Beach. *AP*

Trump chooses anti-vaccine activist Robert F Kennedy Jr as health secretary

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 15

PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump announced Thursday he will nominate anti-vaccine activist Robert F Kennedy Jr to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, putting a man whose views public health officials have decried as dangerous in charge of a massive agency that oversees everything from drug, vaccine and food safety to medical research.

"For too long, Americans have been crushed by the industrial food complex and drug companies who have engaged in deception, misinformation, and disinformation when it comes to Public Health," Trump said Thursday in a post on his Truth Social site announcing the appointment. Kennedy, he said, would "end the Chronic Disease epidemic" and "Make America Great and Healthy Again!" Trump said Kennedy

would target drugs, food additives and chemicals.

Trump also announced Thursday that he has chosen Doug Collins, a former congressman from Georgia, to run the Department of Veterans Affairs. Collins is a chaplain in the US Air Force Reserve Command.

Shares of vaccine firms fall

Shares in European vaccine makers fell on Friday after Trump picked Kennedy. At 1052 GMT, shares in Britain's GSK, AstraZeneca and France's Sanofi were down between 2.4% and 3.2%. Sartorius, a major supplier of biotech lab gear and substances, fell 3.8%. Bavarian Nordic, which makes a vaccine for mpox, was down 16%, also hurt by third quarter results. In premarket trading, US vaccine makers fell further after Thursday's declines, with Moderna down 2.21%, Novavax down 1.94% and Pfizer marginally lower.

Musk meets Iran's UN Ambassador 'to ease tension with US'

FARNAZ FASSIHI
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 15

ELON MUSK, a close adviser to President-elect Donald Trump, met with Iran's ambassador to the United Nations on Monday in New York in a session that two Iranian officials described as a discussion of how to defuse tensions between Iran and the US.

The Iranians said the meeting between Musk and Ambassador Amir Saied Irvani lasted more than an hour and was held at a secret location.

The Iranians described the meeting as "positive" and "good news." Asked about whether there was such a session, Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director, said, "We do not comment on reports of private meetings that did or did not occur." Musk did not respond to a request for comment.

Karoline Leavitt, the transition spokesperson for the incoming Trump-Vance administration, said in a statement: "The American people re-elected President Trump because they trust him to lead our country and restore peace through strength around the world."

The meeting raises the possibility of a change in tone between Tehran and Washington under the Trump administration, despite a charged history between



Elon Musk at the AFPI gala in Florida. *Reuters*

TRUMP VOWS TO END UKRAINE WAR, WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Washington: US President-elect Donald Trump has said his administration will focus on ending the Russia-Ukraine war, as he lamented the killing of people in the conflict. He also said his administration will also work on bringing peace to West Asia. "We're going to work on the Middle East, and we're going to work very hard on Russia and Ukraine. It's got to stop," Trump said during a gala for the America First Policy Institute held at his Mar-a-Lago estate. **PTI**

Trump and Iran. An Iranian official said that it was Musk who had requested the meeting and that the ambassador picked the site. **NYT**

Iran backs Lebanon in ceasefire talks

REUTERS
BEIRUT, NOVEMBER 15

IRAN WILL back any decision taken by Lebanon in talks to secure a ceasefire with Israel, a senior Iranian official said on Friday, signalling Tehran wants to see an end to a conflict that has dealt heavy blows to its Lebanese ally Hezbollah.

Ali Larijani, an advisor to

Iran's supreme leader, spoke during a visit to Beirut as Israel kept up its intensified bombardment of Hezbollah-controlled areas of the Lebanese capital.

Israel has this week stepped up airstrikes against the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs – an escalation that has coincided with indications of movement in US-led diplomatic contacts towards ending the conflict. The US ambassador to

Lebanon submitted a draft truce proposal on Thursday to Lebanon's parliament speaker Nabih Berri, who is endorsed by Hezbollah to negotiate, two Lebanese sources told Reuters.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Berri, Larijani said Berri had provided him with "good clarifications".

"We are not looking to sabotage anything," Larijani said. "We are after a solution to the

Scholz dials Putin, urges him to show willingness to negotiate with Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, NOVEMBER 15

GERMAN CHANCELLOR Olaf Scholz on Friday urged Russia to be willing to negotiate with Ukraine in his first call with Russian President Vladimir Putin in nearly two years. The Kremlin responded that Moscow was

open to new talks and pointed to Putin's earlier proposal that Kyiv should cede territory and back off its plans to join NATO.

Government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said Scholz condemned "Russia's war of aggression" against Ukraine during the call, and called on Putin to end it by withdrawing troops that launched a full-scale invasion

of the country in February 2022. That conflict reaches its 1,000-day mark next week.

"The chancellor urged Russia to be willing to negotiate with Ukraine with the aim of achieving a just and lasting peace and stressed Germany's unwavering determination to support Ukraine," Hebestreit said in a statement.

'NORWEGIANIZATION' POLICY SILENCED LANGUAGES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE & FORCED THEIR CHILDREN INTO BOARDING SCHOOLS

Norway apologises for forced assimilation of Sami, other minorities

LYNSEY CHUTEL
LONDON, NOVEMBER 15

FOR MORE than a century, Norway forcibly suppressed the language and culture of Indigenous people and other minority groups, including removing children from their parents, in a system of "Norwegianisation" whose devastation continues to be felt.

This week, the country's parliament issued a formal apology to the Sami, Kven and Forest Finn peoples and outlined 17 resolutions to address the discrimina-

tion they still face, including protecting minority languages and ensuring that children are taught those languages.

The move, which parliament approved Tuesday, was welcomed by Silje Karine Muotka, a Sami leader, who described the moment as "a day with many emotions."

But she also said it needed to be followed up with concrete and significant action.

"Going forward, we expect an active policy of reconciliation," she said in a written statement. "The decision from today ensures long-term follow-up, and it has both fi-



People gather for a reindeer sleigh ride at a Sami Easter Festival in Kautokeino, Norway, on March 30, 2018. *NYT*

nancial and legal repercussions. But unfortunately, no settlement is made with ongoing injustice and conflicts over land and water."

Norway has some legislation on the Samis' right to grazing land, but the Sami have long been at odds with the government over land use in relation to their culture and way of life.

The apology and resolutions stem from a report by a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published last year, that outlines how Norway could begin to reckon with its oppressive past. King Harald V has previously apologized to the Sami people, but this

is the first time that the Kvens and Forest Finns have received such a public acknowledgment of the harm they endured.

"The assimilation policy that was historically pursued continues to be both the root of personal hardship for the individuals and groups that were subject to this policy, and a source of conflict today," Svein Harberg, a Conservative Party lawmaker, said in a written response to a reporter's questions after the apology was read out in parliament.

Only one group of lawmakers, from the right-wing Progress Party, voted against the resolu-

tions, saying that they would lead to conflict among communities.

The Sami are an Indigenous group, now numbering roughly 100,000, who have for hundreds of years inhabited Europe's northernmost regions, across Finland, Russia, Sweden and Norway, which is home to the largest Sami population.

The Kvens and Forest Finns are much smaller groups who migrated to modern-day Norway about 500 years ago.

All three have faced centuries of discrimination that became the foundation of laws in the second half of the 19th century. **NYT**



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EXPLAINED POLICY

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

In ‘life certificate’ month, how Govt’s Jeevan Pramaan has been faring

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

EVERY NOVEMBER, retirees, including from the government, Defence services, Railways, public sector undertakings, and many higher education institutions, etc. have to submit a “life certificate” to continue to receive their pensions for another year.

Since 2014, the government has been issuing Digital Life Certificates (DLCs), or Jeevan Pramaan, so the pensioner does not have to physically appear before the pension-disbursing authorities – which include banks and post offices – or deliver a paper life certificate to them in the prescribed format.

Jeevan Pramaan can be generated online anywhere, and is made available directly to the relevant pension-disbursing authority.

The third annual DLC Campaign began on November 1, and will continue until November 30. The Department of Pension and Pensioners’ Welfare (DoPPW) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, is holding 1,900 camps to help pensioners generate their DLCs.

However, pensioners who prefer to physically go to post offices or banks to submit their life certificates can continue to do so.

Number of pensioners

As of March 31 this year, there were 64.88 crore central government pensioners, including 10.09 lakh civilian pensioners, 31.92 lakh Defence pensioners, 15.25 lakh Railways pensioners, 4.56 lakh telecom pensioners, and 3.04 lakh postal pensioners, DoPPW data show.

Jeevan Pramaan numbers

A total 1.47 crore certificates were generated during last year’s DLC campaign, including those of 45.46 lakh cen-

tral government pensioners.

DoPPW sources said more than 50 lakh central government pensioners could show up at the camps this November.

Generation of a DLC

The Jeevan Pramaan portal uses Aadhaar for biometric authentication, which can be done by pensioners on their own, or by visiting a camp. From 2021 onward, face authentication has been added as an option.

To generate a DLC, the pensioner must have an Aadhaar and a mobile number linked to it, and should have registered their Aadhaar with the pension disbursing authority. If they choose to use the Jeevan Pramaan app or website on their own (without going to the camp), they also need a biometric (fingerprint scanning) device.

The camps are being held in 800 cities and towns across the country and at Indian missions abroad. Separately, post offices and banks are holding their own camps.

Campaign takeaways

In its review of the first 11 days of the campaign, the DoPPW is learnt to have found that more pensioners (31.02%) opted for face authentication than over the same period last year (less than 20%). Of the 48.10 lakh DLCs generated between November 1 and November 11, more than 63% opted for fingerprint authentication.

In the first week of the campaign (November 1-8), 3760 lakh DLCs were generated – 45% of which were for pensioners aged 60-70 years, 28% for those 70-80 years old, and 21% for those below 60 years.

The largest number of DLCs have been generated in Maharashtra so far, followed by Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka.

“The digital empowerment of pensioners is a big step forward, saving them the trouble of visiting the pension office every November,” DoPPW Secretary V Srinivas said.

Three-quarters of US adults are now overweight or obese: Study

NEARLY THREE-quarters of the adult population in the United States is overweight or obese, according to a new study. The findings have wide-reaching implications for health and medical costs as the US faces a growing burden of weight-related diseases.

The study, published in *The Lancet* on Thursday, reveals the striking rise of obesity rates nationwide since 1990 – when just over half of adults were overweight or obese – and shows how more people are becoming overweight or obese at younger ages than in the past.

Both conditions can raise the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, and shorten life expectancy.

The study documented increases in the rates of overweight and obesity across ages. Its authors were particularly alarmed by the steep rise in obesity among children, more than 1 in 3 of whom are now overweight or obese. Without aggressive intervention, they forecast, the number of

overweight and obese people will continue to go up – reaching nearly 260 million people in 2050.

The paper defined “overweight” adults as those who were age 25 and over with a body mass index at or over 25, and “obese” adults as those with a BMI at or over 30.

The authors acknowledged that BMI is an imperfect measure that may not capture variations in body structure across the population. But from a scientific perspective, experts said, BMI is correlated with other measures of body fat and is a practical tool for studying it at a population level.

The rate of obesity in particular rose steeply, doubling in adults between 1990 and 2021 to more than 40% – and nearly tripling, to 29%, among girls and women aged 15 to 24.

A Joint Economic Committee Republicans report released this year predicted that obesity will result in up to \$9.1 trillion in excess medical expenditures over the next 10 years.



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SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 15

AS A parliamentary panel deliberates on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, a land row in Kerala has become national news.

The Kerala State Waqf Board has long staked claim over 400-odd acres of land stretching across the villages of Kuzhupilly and Pallipuram at Munambam, on the northern edge of the Vypin Island in Kerala’s Ernakulam district. This land has been occupied for generations by fisherfolk. It is home to some 600 families today, around two thirds of whom are Christians belonging to the backward Latin Catholic community,

and the rest are backward Hindus. With residents protesting against the Muslim body’s claim, the BJP made it a poll issue in the recently-held bypolls in the state, more so with the Kerala Assembly unanimously passing a resolution against the Waqf Amendment Bill last month.

Genesis of issue

The roots of the controversy can be traced to 1902, when the erstwhile Travancore royal family leased 404 acres of land, already occupied by fisherfolk, to a trader named Abdul Sathar Moosa Sait, who had settled in Mattancherry near Kochi.

In 1948, his successor and son-in-law Mohammed Siddeeq Sait got the leased

land registered in his name. He then decided to hand over the land to the management of Kozhikode’s Farook College, which was established in 1948 to educationally empower Muslims of northern Kerala.

On November 1, 1950, a waqf deed was registered at the sub-registrar’s office in Edappally, Kochi, executed by Sait in favour of the president of the Farook College. A waqf deed is a document that establishes a waqf – property that is permanently dedicated for charitable or religious purposes under Islamic law.

First legal battle

Farook College’s management received

the title deed for the land around a decade later. In the late-1960s, a legal battle began between the land’s occupants, who despite residing there for generations did not have official documents to prove ownership, and the college’s management, which wanted to evict these occupants.

Eventually, in an out of court settlement, the college’s management decided to sell the land to its occupants at market rate. Documents show that in the sale deeds, the college management did not mention that the land in question was waqf property granted to the president of the college management committee for the purpose of education. They instead said the property

EXPLAINED POLITICS

Team Trump takes shape

Trump’s picks for his second term reflect the lessons he has learnt from his first, his determination to build an administration in his own image, and the unparalleled premium he places on personal loyalty

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

OVER THE past week, United States President-elect Donald Trump has made several appointments in his incoming administration, including filling 10 Cabinet-level positions.

His choices reflect the lessons he has learnt from his first term in the Oval Office, his determination to build an administration in his own image, and the unparalleled premium he places on personal loyalty.

As Team Trump takes shape, here are some key takeaways.

Loyalty above all else

Trump has tapped his staunchest allies and well-wishers for the positions he considers the most important, regardless of their past experience or qualifications for the job.

The standout example is Trump’s choice of Pete Hegseth, a military veteran and an ultraconservative Fox News host who has been his die-hard supporter and advocate, as Secretary of Defence.

Hegseth, 44, will be the youngest ever in the post. With no previous experience in administration at any level, he will be in charge of the world’s most powerful military.

Former Democratic Representative Tulsi Gabbard, who has been tapped to be Director of National Intelligence, has no previous experience in national security and intelligence positions – even though she has served for long in the Army National Guard.

Lessons from Trump 1.0

Analyses by *The New York Times* and the *Financial Times* noted that Trump appears to have learnt lessons from his 2017-21 term, during which he, still an outsider to Washington, made more conventional appointments from the Republican policy establishment. These appointees, *The NYT* said, were often “too independent” for him.

In picking Hegseth, Gabbard, and Matt Gaetz (for Attorney General), Trump has targeted the three pillars of the so-called “deep state” that frustrated him the most in his first term – the Pentagon, intelligence agencies, and the Department of Justice.

Appointees to these posts in Trump 1.0 either resigned or were fired after fundamental disagreements with Trump, including a refusal to help legitimise his presidency and overturn the results of the 2020 election.

Eye on legal cases

The appointment of Gaetz, 42 – the subject of a now-dropped federal sex-trafficking investigation and a House Ethics Committee inquiry, and the architect of a far right revolt that ousted the Republican Speaker Kevin McCarthy – is key in the context of the legal challenges that Trump continues to face.

A pliant head of the Department of Justice could simply dismiss the two federal cases against Trump (related to the January 6, 2021 Capitol attack and his handling of confidential documents after he left the White House), without putting the President in a situation in which he has to pardon himself.

Gaetz has been a strong critic of the DoJ and FBI, organisations that he will, if confirmed by the Senate, head as America’s top law enforcement officer.

Unease among Republicans

Most of Trump’s appointments will have to be confirmed in the Senate, which will be under Republican control come January.

Several Republican leaders are said to be unhappy or uncomfortable with Trump’s choices. Gaetz’s confirmation, especially, is said to be up in the air, given that he is disliked by a number of both Democrats and Republicans.

Given the mandate Trump has got from American voters, however, most Republican Senators will likely fall in line. The only Republican Senator to have broken publicly from Trump’s choice so far has been Susan Collins of Maine, who has specifically questioned the choice of Gaetz.

Trump, on his part, has hinted that he wants to make “recess appointments”, which would bypass hearings in Congress.

ALL THE PRESIDENT’S MEN & WOMEN

Marco Rubio



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of State
SHORT STORY: Contested against Trump for Republican nomination in

2016. Their relationship improved, and Rubio’s foreign policy views aligned more with Trump’s.

ROLE: Secretary of State is President’s chief foreign affairs adviser.
INDIA CONNECTION: Has advocated deeper US-India partnership, especially in light of China’s increased heft in global affairs. Said in 2023 that US and India’s economic and security interests overlapped on many issues.

Pete Hegseth



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of Defense
SHORT STORY: TV host at Fox News, has supported Trump’s ‘America

First’ view since his first term. During that time, he reportedly lobbied for pardons of three military personnel who faced allegations of committing war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

ROLE: Department of Defense is the largest government bureaucracy, with a national defence budget of \$842 billion. Secretary is the principal defence policy maker and adviser.

Matt Gaetz



TAPPED FOR: Attorney General
SHORT STORY: Has long supported Trump, repeating his claims of being unfairly targeted

by the Biden administration and the Department of Justice.

ROLE: As AG, Gaetz will be the federal government’s top legal officer. The AG heads the Department of Justice and gives advice and opinion to the President and the heads of the executive departments. Gaetz will have power to control the proceedings in the two federal cases against Trump.

Susie Wiles



TAPPED FOR: White House Chief of Staff
SHORT STORY: Met Trump for the first time in 2015, was appointed co-chair

of his Florida campaigns in 2016 and 2020, and co-chair of 2024 presidential campaign. Was reportedly one of the few people who could control some of Trump’s worst impulses.

ROLE: Chief of Staff helps define President’s agenda, executes his vision. She’s the President’s gatekeeper.

ALIND CHAUHAN & RISHIKA SINGH

More effective term likely

Trump seems likely to be far more effective in furthering his political agenda in his second term than he was in his first. With a cabal of ardent loyalists backing him, and a massive mandate that has seen Republicans

take control of both the House and Senate apart from the White House, there is seemingly very little that could thwart his legislative agenda.

Trump is also likely wiser from his previous experience as President, and might



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Robert F Kennedy Jr



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of Health and Human Services
SHORT STORY: Environmental lawyer and former

Democrat ran for President as an Independent before dropping out and endorsing Trump. Has been a vaccine sceptic and critic of the pharma industry. Trump has said he would “let [Kennedy] go wild on health”.

ROLE: Job is to protect Americans’ health; will be in charge of 80,000 staff; run around 100 programs, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Michael Waltz



TAPPED FOR: National Security Adviser
SHORT STORY: Leading critic of China, has flagged the need for US to

be prepared for a potential conflict in the Asia-Pacific. Has applauded Trump for pushing NATO allies to spend more.

ROLE: NSA plays a major role in foreign and national security policy decision-making, briefs the President on key national security issues.

INDIA CONNECTION: Head of India caucus, has advocated stronger US-India defence & security cooperation.

Tulsi Gabbard



TAPPED FOR: Director of National Intelligence
SHORT STORY: Former Democrat, unsuccessfully ran

for President in 2020. Later switched loyalty to Republicans and Trump.

ROLE: According to *The New York Times*, she “would oversee 18 spy agencies and would be responsible for preparing the President’s Daily Brief, a daily written intelligence summary.”

INDIA CONNECTION: Her mother Carol took a deep interest in Hinduism; Gabbard is a practising Hindu.

Kristi Noem



TAPPED FOR: Secretary of Homeland Security
SHORT STORY: South Dakota’s first woman Governor became a

Conservative star after she resisted federal regulations to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Has backed Trump’s mass deportations plan. Was criticised after she wrote about killing a dog that was “untrainable” and a goat that was “nasty and mean”.

ROLE: Will oversee immigration laws, will be chief implementer of Trump’s hardline immigration agenda.

Elon Musk



TAPPED FOR: Co-lead, Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)
SHORT STORY: Musk was one of Trump’s biggest campaign contributors, used X to campaign for him. Has gained extraordinary influence over Trump’s transition process, reportedly sitting in on nearly every job interview.

Vivek Ramaswamy



TAPPED FOR: Co-lead, DOGE
SHORT STORY: Competed against Trump for Republican nomination but subsequently dropped out and endorsed him. Has vowed support for Trump’s plans to cut bureaucracy; proposed to eliminate Education Department, FBI, IRS; cut federal workforce by 75%.

What is the Kerala waqf land dispute, which became a byelection issue?

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOVEMBER 15

AS A parliamentary panel deliberates on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, a land row in Kerala has become national news.

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and the rest are backward Hindus. With residents protesting against the Muslim body’s claim, the BJP made it a poll issue in the recently-held bypolls in the state, more so with the Kerala Assembly unanimously passing a resolution against the Waqf Amendment Bill last month.

Genesis of issue

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land registered in his name. He then decided to hand over the land to the management of Kozhikode’s Farook College, which was established in 1948 to educationally empower Muslims of northern Kerala.

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Eventually, in an out of court settlement, the college’s management decided to sell the land to its occupants at market rate. Documents show that in the sale deeds, the college management did not mention that the land in question was waqf property granted to the president of the college management committee for the purpose of education. They instead said the property

was received as per a gift deed in 1950.

Nissar Commission

In the wake of a number of complaints against Kerala’s Waqf Board, the CPI(M) government under in 2008 appointed an inquiry commission led by retired district judge M A Nissar. The terms of reference for the commission included fixing responsibility for the loss of assets by the board, and recommending action for their recovery.

In its report, the commission deemed the land in Munambam to be waqf property, and said the college management had approved of its sale without the board’s consent. It recommended action for its recovery.

In 2019, the Waqf Board suo motu de-

clared the Munambam land to be waqf property as per Sections 40 and 41 of the Waqf Act of 1995. The board directed the Revenue Department not to accept land tax from the present occupants (who had been paying taxes for the past several years). This directive was overruled by the state government in 2022.

After being challenged in the Kerala High Court in 2022, the state government’s decision was stayed. Currently, more than a dozen appeals regarding this dispute are pending with the court.

The Farook College management too has challenged the Waqf Board’s takeover. It has maintained that the land was never waqf land but gifted to the college by the Sait family.

Economy in a sweet spot, to grow 7.2% in 2024: Moody’s

Sees RBI sticking to tight monetary policy stance going into 2025

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

AMID CONCERNS about urban demand moderation and many high-frequency indicators signalling a slowdown, Moody’s Ratings on Friday retained its 7.2% economic growth projection for India for calendar year 2024, citing likely improvement in household consumption, a sustained pick-up in rural demand, rising capacity utilisation, and the government’s continued thrust on infrastructure spending.

“Indeed, from a macroeconomic perspective, the Indian economy is in a sweet spot, with the mix of solid growth and moderating inflation. We forecast a 7.2% growth for calendar year 2024, followed by 6.6% in 2025 and 6.5% in 2026,” Moody’s said in its Global Macro Outlook on Friday. The Indian economy had grown by 7.7% in 2023.

Despite a near-term uptick, inflation should moderate towards the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) target in the coming months as food prices ease amid higher sowing and adequate foodgrain buffer stocks, the agency said. Potential risks to inflation from heightened geopolitical tensions and extreme weather events underscore the RBI’s cautious approach to policy easing.

In October, the RBI stuck to its forecast that the Indian economy will expand 7.2% in the fiscal ending March 2025 despite recent evidence showing activity starting to taper off. The RBI’s outlook is far more optimistic than the 6.5-7% growth projected by the finance ministry economists.

India’s rural demand continues to improve, but urban demand appears to be moderating due to softening consumer sentiment, the ministry said in the September monthly economic review. India’s GDP growth rate

for the January-March quarter of 2024 came in at a solid 7.8% and at 6.7% in Q2, driven by a revival in household consumption, robust investment and strong manufacturing activity.

“High-frequency indicators including expanding manufacturing and services PMIs, robust credit growth and consumer optimism—signal steady economic momentum in Q3,” Moody’s said. Household consumption is poised to grow, fuelled by increased spending during the ongoing festive season and a sustained pick-up in rural demand on the back of an improved agricultural outlook, it said. Additionally, rising capacity utilisation, upbeat business sentiment, and the government’s continued thrust on infrastructure spending should support private investment.

Sound economic fundamentals, including healthy corporate and bank balance sheets, a

stronger external position and ample foreign exchange reserves also bode well for the growth outlook, according to Moody’s.

Sporadic food price pressures continue to inject volatility in the disinflation trajectory. Headline inflation breached the upper bound of the RBI’s 4% (+/-2%) tolerance band for the first time in more than a year in October, accelerating to 6.2% amid a sharp jump in vegetable prices.

Despite the near-term uptick, inflation should moderate towards the RBI’s target in the coming months as food prices ease amid higher sowing and adequate food grain buffer stocks.

Although the central bank shifted its monetary policy stance to neutral while keeping the repo rate steady at 6.5% in October, it will likely retain relatively tight monetary policy settings into the next year, given the fairly healthy growth dynamics and inflation risks, it added. **FE**

Sebi slaps ₹26 cr fine on Reliance Big Entertainment in RHFL fund diversion case

New Delhi: Capital markets regulator Sebi has asked Reliance Big Entertainment to pay ₹26 crore in fines for failing to clear penalties imposed by the regulator in a case pertaining to illegal diversion of funds.

The regulator also warned that assets, including bank accounts, of Reliance Big Entertainment Pvt Ltd (now known as Rbep Entertainment Pvt Ltd) will be attached if they fail to make the payment within 15 days of the notice issued on Thursday.

The notice was issued after the entity (Reliance Big Entertainment) failed to pay the Rs 25 crore fine imposed by the regulator in August this year.

In the demand notice, Sebi directed the entity to pay Rs 26 crore, including interest and recovery costs within 15 days.

In August this year, the markets watchdog barred industrialist Anil Ambani and 24 others from the securities market for five years on charges of diversion of funds from RHFL. **PTI**

TIM MILLET ON APPLE’S CHIP PHILOSOPHY

‘We are not a merchant silicon company, we are trying to leave nothing on the table’

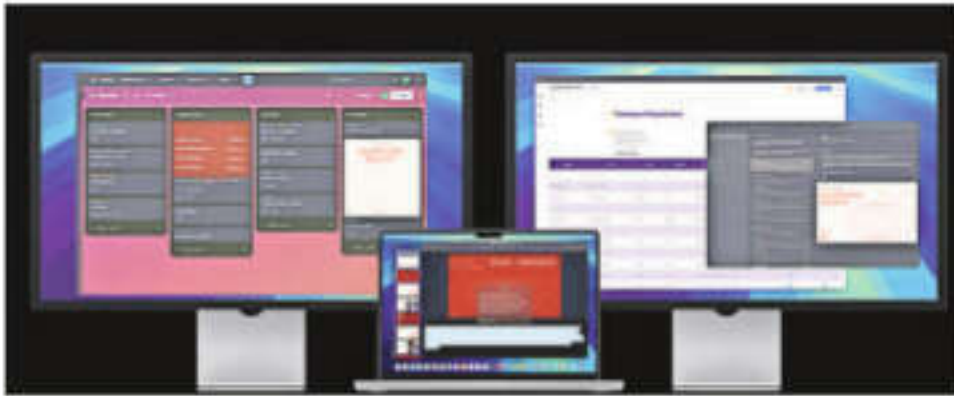
NANDAGOPAL RAJAN
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

TIM MILLET, Vice President of Platform Architecture (Hardware Technologies) at Apple, is clear about what differentiates the company’s silicon strategy and why it is able to outperform the competition continuously. “We are not a merchant silicon company. We do not build chips and sell them to other people. We do not make money that way. Folks who do make money that way have the burden of adding margin on top of whatever they buy,” he said.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* soon after the announcement of the new Apple M4 Pro and M4 Max processors, which Apple claims “feature the world’s fastest CPU core, delivering the industry’s best single-threaded performance”, Millet highlighted that merchant silicon companies “can’t just go to the latest cutting edge technology like the second generation, three nanometer...but we (Apple) benefit from it in a way that we believe it is worth it. It delivers for us and our products and our customers... we are trying to leave nothing on the table.”

Apple’s secret weapon

Explaining what gives Apple silicon an edge now, Millet said, “We take advantage of the three major components, the architecture, the design, and the process technology. Our fourth tool, really



Apple M4 Pro and M4 Max processors feature the world’s fastest CPU core, claims the company. *Apple.com*

our secret weapon, I think, is our ability to co-design these amazing chips with the system teams and the product designers as they are imagining possibilities.”

Always designed for AI

With Cupertino starting to roll out Apple Intelligence features in different parts of the world, Boger clarified that they have “always had intelligent features in our Mac”. “One of the things that we announced is the fact that Apple Intelligence runs on any Mac with an M series chip, right? So from the first M1 chip, we have included the Neural Engine, and we have a great architecture for AI. And we also have developers taking advantage of Apple silicon to offer our customers intelligent features. So the M Series chips were always built for AI,” he said.

I think we have to go back to 2017 when we introduced the Neural Engine in our iOS products. And really this was inspired by our recognition of the impor-

tance of computational photography,” explained Millet.

He accepts that it is a “little bit of good fortune that this investment turned out to pay off.”

‘Push things forward’

“One of the things that we do with Apple silicon is we advance the state of the art, right? And we push things forward, whatever metric you measure it by, whether it is CPU performance, GPU performance, Neural Engine performance because that has always been the name of the game,” added Boger, underlining that Apple silicon continues to just push things further “because that’s what our customers do”.

Generation after generation of the A Series chips made for iPhones and iPads, Boger said, had this tremendous focus on power efficiency, and they have kept that focus with the M series chips which are now in its fourth generation. **FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com**

General Motors lays off about 1,000 workers

Detroit: General Motors is laying off about 1,000 workers worldwide, shedding costs as it tries to compete in a crowded global automobile market.

The workers, mostly white collar, were notified about the decisions early Friday. The company confirmed the layoffs in a statement but gave few details.

“We need to optimise for speed and excellence,” the statement said. “This includes operating with efficiency, ensuring we have the right team structure and focusing on our top priorities.” GM and other automakers have been navigating an uncertain transition to electric vehicles both in the US and worldwide, trying to figure out where to invest capital and how fast the switch will happen.

The company has had to develop and update gas-powered models while investing in EV battery and assembly plants as well as minerals and other parts for the next generation of electric vehicles.

Through September, US new EV sales are up 7.2% to about 936,000, according to Motorintelligence.com. That’s slower growth than the 47% increase in 2023. But EV sales this year are likely to surpass last year’s record of 1.19 million, and the EV share of new vehicle sales this year is 7.9%, up from 7.6% last year. GM has about 150,000 employees worldwide, with the largest group at its technical centre in the Detroit suburb of Warren, Michigan. The company had 76,000 white-collar workers worldwide at the end of last year. **AP**

As senior living sector grows in India, a 25-year-old policy set to get a refresh

AGGAM WALIA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

THE MINISTRY of Social Justice and Empowerment is working on amending the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 and updating the National Policy for Older Persons, 1999 to promote India’s senior care economy, including the senior living sector.

Speaking at an event organised by the Association of Senior Living India (ASLI), Secretary Amit Yadav highlighted the need to address challenges around property rights and the key role of the private sector in developing senior living in India.

“Right now, the ministry is working on two areas. We had come out with a policy in 1999 on senior citizens. Now, we are in a position where, after wide consultations with stakeholders, the new policy is in the making. It will give us a direction for the next 25 years. The other thing is amendments to the 2007 act, based on challenges or inputs that have been received over a period of time. This shows very clearly the intent and the way the government is preparing the country for the senior citizens,” Yadav said.

Both the 1999 policy and the 2007 act, which was amended in 2019, include clauses dealing with protection of property rights and old age homes. The changes are likely to address the evolving landscape of senior care, now characterised by active participation from private service providers, de-

velopers, and operators. In their current form, both policy and legislation deal primarily with old age homes supported by state or local governments. However, the senior living market now encompasses a much broader array of players, services, unit types, and a new dynamic between buyers, developers, and operators.

60% of the market concentrated in South

The share of citizens aged 60-plus is set to increase from 157 million in 2024 (11 per cent of total population) to 260 million in 2040 (16 per cent) and 346 million in 2050 (21 per cent). “The challenge is the growing numbers. (The government) has to work with the private sector... The other thing is the feminization (of senior population), as people above 60 are more women and widows than men because the life expectancy for women is much higher than for men,” Yadav said.

Since 2022, senior living launches in India have averaged 2,000 units per year, almost double of around 1,100 units launched annually between 2014 and 2021, according to a new JLL report launched at the event. The report added that 60 per cent of India’s senior living market is concentrated in the south, followed by 20 per cent in the north, 16 per cent in western India, and 4 per cent in east India.

The report also found that the top 10 players in the senior living market, including Ashiana Housing, Columbia Pacific, Antara, Pranjape, Athulya, Primus Life, and

Covai Care, account for 81 per cent of India’s total senior living inventory. Moreover, 81 per cent of launched units are priced between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore and 86 per cent are sized between 500 to 1,500 square feet. The demand for senior living units is set to touch 2.3 million units by 2030 compared to 1.6 million units in 2024.

“By 2050, one in every five Indians will be a senior. That represents about 70 per cent of the world’s population of seniors. It’s a very large and staggering number. Life expectancy has gone up in India, fortunately, but so has the disease burden. As you grow older, there are four I-s—instability, immobility, impairment and incontinence,” Rajit Mehta, ASLI Chairman and CEO of Antara Senior Living said.

Mehta added that post-Covid, seniors are increasingly seeking an active lifestyle and have also become very digitally savvy. “They also want people to curate services for them. Now, you see a lot of travel portals coming up for curating travel procedures. A lot of geriatric care hospitals are also coming up for seniors. Many have now expressed a desire to live amongst people who are non-seniors,” he said. Antara has also launched its first intergenerational project where seniors and non-seniors live together.

Need for nodal agency

In terms of government support, Mehta suggested there should be one nodal agency that deals with senior care, which

deals with issues of social justice, health, housing, and infrastructure. He added that a taskforce can also be created to study best practices followed in countries like Japan and Switzerland, where senior care is very developed.

Mehta also suggested that when master planning is done for cities, land should be demarcated separately for senior living so that allocation is easier and costs more manageable. Anticipating rapid expansion in the senior living segment, policymakers and regulators are moving quickly. In February, the government’s apex think tank NITI Aayog released a report recommending reforms, including accreditation for senior care facilities and a single window approval to fast-track projects. The latter recommendation is especially crucial, given the time-sensitive needs of senior buyers and the real estate sector’s reputation for long delays in handing over possession.

Moreover, in March, the social justice and empowerment ministry set minimum standards for senior citizen homes, followed by Maharashtra’s Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) drafting model guidelines for senior living projects in May. The central government’s focus on senior care is also set to intensify, evident from its recent decision to extend the Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY insurance programme to citizens aged 70 and above and IRDAI’s scrapping of age limits on purchase of health insurance policies. **FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com**

I-T Dept nudges taxpayers to disclose foreign assets correctly

Revised returns can be filed by December 31

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

IN AN explicit nudge to taxpayers citing compliance with global disclosure norms, the Income Tax Department has urged them to disclose details of foreign assets and income correctly in their income tax returns and file revised returns by December 31, if there is a requirement to update the information.

The Department, it is learnt, will also begin an e-campaign in the next few days to facilitate filing of details of foreign assets and income by taxpayers, a government official said.

The campaign is being launched with the aim to reach out to those taxpayers who have not disclosed details of their foreign income and assets correctly in their income tax returns but the tax department has received

information about them through various information-gathering and sharing agreements of India with other countries, an official said. “There is substantial information being received from other countries about ownership of foreign income and assets. This campaign will provide a window to taxpayers to disclose their information of foreign income and assets correctly in their income tax returns,” the official said.

The Income Tax Department has urged taxpayers that by ensuring full transparency in tax returns, taxpayers can “avoid legal hassles and contribute to national development”.

“If you have not disclosed your foreign assets and income in your original ITR, there is an opportunity to rectify this through filing a revised return. The Income Tax Department allows taxpayers to correct any

omissions or inaccuracies by filing a revised return. For the AY 2024-25 revised return can be filed up to 31.12.2024,” the Department said in a note.

The details about foreign assets and income are shared between the countries in line with international reporting frameworks such as the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) and the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) aimed to tackle tax evasion by increasing transparency and cooperation among tax authorities globally. Under CRS and FATCA, India receives detailed information about financial accounts held by its residents in foreign jurisdictions, which includes account holder’s name, address, and tax identification number (TIN), account number and balance, income details such as interest, dividends, and other financial proceeds.

Lofty election promises could further strain already tight fiscal situation

AGGAM WALIA
& AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

AS ASSEMBLY elections get underway in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, political parties across the spectrum are outdoing each other in making ambitious poll promises. The problem, though, is that a bulk of these promises could put further strain on already tight fiscal scenarios in both states.

Maharashtra has so far maintained a relatively healthier debt position, keeping its fiscal deficit under 3 per cent of gross state domestic product (GSDP) for the past three years. However, its growth in per capita income has lagged behind that of other large states. Jharkhand faces more significant fiscal pressures, with a debt-to-GSDP ratio consistently above 30 per cent over the last three years. At the same time, the state has channelled capital expenditure toward social services, which could yield long-term human capital benefits.

Notably, Jharkhand boasts the lowest female unemployment rate in India even as it offers the highest wages in organised manufacturing. Yet, per capita income remains a challenge for both

states. Although Maharashtra leads the nation in economic activity, its per capita income growth has been sluggish, with a CAGR of just 2.99 per cent over the last five years, trailing the national average of 3.11 per cent.

Maharashtra: Largest contributor to India’s GDP with services sector in the lead

Maharashtra, where elections are slated for November 20, saw its gross state domestic product (GSDP) grow by 7.6 per cent in 2023-24, reaching over Rs 24 lakh crore (at constant prices) from Rs 20 lakh crore in 2018-19. The state’s economy continues to be largely driven by services — primarily real estate, financial services, and hospitality — which contribute roughly 60 per cent to its gross value addition, followed by manufacturing at 30 per cent and agriculture at 10 per cent.

Later this month, Maharashtra will see a face off between the incumbent Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti alliance that formed the state government in 2022 after the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance fell due to insufficient numbers in the state assembly.

KEY METRICS OF POLL-BOUND STATES									
	JHARKHAND			MAHARASHTRA			INDIA		
	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY22	FY23	FY24
GSDP* (constant)	2.43	2.60	2.78	20.48	22.41	24.11	150.22	160.71	173.82
Per Capita Income (constant, in ₹)	57,172	60,938	65,062	1,40,718	1,53,664	1,63,820	94,054	99,404	1,06,744
Fiscal Deficit (as % of GSDP)	0.73	1.17	2.73	2	1.9	2.8	6.8	6.4	5.6
Capex**	15,087	24,956	31,742	49,106	66,308	94,851	5,92,874#	7,40,025#	9,48,506#
Total debt to GSDP (%)	31.6	30.1	30.6	18.3	17.3	17.6	58.8	57.9	58.2
Unemployment rate (%)	2	1.7	1.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	4.1	3.2	3.2

* (in ₹ lakh crore), ** In ₹ crore, # Centre’s Capex Source: State Budgets, MoSPI

and unemployment a key focus

However, the state’s per capita income growth has been comparatively sluggish. From 2019-20 to 2023-24, per capita income rose at an annually compounded rate of 2.99 per cent to Rs 1.64 lakh (at constant prices), trailing behind the national average CAGR of 3.11 per cent. Other big states like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka have outperformed Maharashtra on this indicator.

Maharashtra’s fiscal deficit as a percentage of GSDP has increased from 2 per cent in 2021-22 to 2.8 per cent in 2023-24, with

potential to increase further on account of populist poll promises. On the other hand, its debt-to-GSDP ratio has improved, declining to 17.6 per cent from 18.3 per cent over the same period.

In the run-up to the polls, both the Mahayuti that is in power and the MVA alliance in opposition have made promises that include various sops for women, farmers, and unemployed youth that could further stress the state’s finances.

Unemployment in Maharashtra has remained below the all-India average between 2019-20 and 2022-23. However, in 2023-24, it slightly exceeded

Inflation also remains a key point of concern. In September, retail inflation in the state stood at 5.04 per cent as against the all-India rate of 5.49 per cent. Even though in FY24, the inflation rate eased to 5.1 per cent from 7.3 per cent a year ago, over the last four years, the inflation rate in the state has remained above 5 per cent.

Jharkhand: High wages in manufacturing but low per capita income

With the lowest female unemployment rate and the highest manufacturing wages in the country, Jharkhand is set to vote in two phases November 13 and 20. A state rich in minerals, which helps it earn over three-fourth of its non-tax revenue and around 14 per cent of total revenue, Jharkhand, however, grapples with the challenge of high debt-GSDP ratio, with the levels hovering over 30 per cent in the last three years. In Jharkhand, the incumbent CM Hemant Soren’s Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in alliance with the Indian National Congress (INC) will face off against the BJP, which lost the 2019 assembly elections under CM Raghubar Das. While high manufacturing wages indicate

better employment conditions in the organised sector in the state, other sectors and economic indicators lag behind. The per capita income in Jharkhand is among the lowest in the country along with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur. In 2023-24, per capita net state domestic product (at constant prices) was the lowest for Bihar at Rs 32,174, followed by Uttar Pradesh at Rs 50,875 and Jharkhand at Rs 65,062.

Manufacturing accounts for around 30 per cent of the state’s GSDP, next only to the services sector whose share is around 45 per cent. The mining-focused nature of economic activity in Jharkhand is reflected in the high wages in the organised manufacturing sector, with the state recording Rs 3.17 lakh as wages per worker — the highest among 35 states and union territories of the country and over 1.5 times of the all-India wage per worker of Rs 2.05 lakh in 2022-23, data from the latest Annual Survey of Industries 2022-23 showed.

On the inflation front, retail inflation moderated to 5.7 per cent for 2023-24 from 6.1 per cent in 2022-23. In September, the inflation rate in the state was at 5.15 per cent, a bit lower than the all-India inflation rate of 5.49 per cent.

SHUBHRA GUPTA

THE CHOICE of using *Freedom At Midnight*, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre's account of the tumultuous build-up to India's independence in August 1947, as the basis for the seven-part web series of the same name achieves one thing above all else: adapting from source material which has been in existence for several years, especially from the celebrity author duo who couldn't be accused of being either pro-India, or pro-Pakistan, frees creator and director Nikkhil Advani of being accused of similar bias.

Or, let's say, it should. But revanchism hangs heavily in the air, and history is being revised and re-written, as we speak, so any interpretation is up for being challenged.

If there's one thing that Collins and Lapierre can be accused of is that their racy, pacy writing style turns one of the most violent, difficult partitions of a land into an easily digestible socio-political thriller, which flattens the complexity and nuance of the subject. That, and the distinct bent towards Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India who presided over the last few months of the British Raj, helping carve the region on religious lines.

Given the polarised, 'post-truth' times we live in, I'm sure there will be as many arrows slung at the omissions and commissions in the series. Condensing a thousand-plus pages into seven episodes of 40-45 minutes necessitates a pruning, and a point-of-view:

you can see the attempt at balance and objectivity, but no quarters are given when portraying Jinnah (Arif Zakaria) as an adamant-beyond-reason, insecure individual who is shown being eaten up by his desire to be seen 'equal' if not greater than Gandhi (Chirag Vohra) and Nehru (Sidhant Gupta).

Lapierre and Collins may not have been British, but they are very clearly Anglophones. Getting our people back into our own history, or rather, histories, and putting Mountbatten and his machinations where they belong, is the burden of the series. And it does succeed, to a large extent, at putting the record straight, seen from the eyes of those who were fighting for freedom, rather than those who were forced to give it, even if it comes off not as profound as it could have. But then, the book itself is patently not aiming for profundity: its easy readability can be seen in the series' attempts at making itself relatable to an audience which has byte-sized attention spans.

By the end of the first episode, it's clear that Advani and his team of writers are going to tell us this story mainly in a series of conversations between the chief *dramatis personae*: there's Nehru and Patel and Gandhi and the others in the Congress on one side, and there's Muslim League's Jinnah, and his compatriots Liaquat Ali Khan (Rajesh Kumar) and Huseyn



FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT ★★★

Director: Nikkhil Advani

Cast: Sidhant Gupta, Chirag Vohra, Rajendra Chawla, Luke McGibney, Cordelia Bugeja, Arif Zakaria, Ira Dubey, Malishka Mendonsa, K C Shankar, Rajesh Kumar, Pawan Chopra, Anuvab Pal, Khurshed J Lawyer, Shreya Nair, Urvashi Dubey, Andrew Cullum

Streaming on: Sony LIV

Suhrawardy (Anuvab Pal) on another, with the Sikhs and other players in between.

While re-creating all events would have been far too unwieldy for the format (there

are a few exceptions, like the Chauri Chaura 'kaand' and the devastating Noakhali riots, among others), the series of conversations does make things static, especially when the

actors adopt their favourite stance of facing front and speaking to the camera, with their companions behind them.

Then, of course, there is the insistent background music (BGM) — my top bugbear — which is so loud that it threatens to drown out both the dialogues as well as the staging. It got to the point where I literally fell upon with relief on the few portions which have the courage to dispense the BGM.

This is an interesting ensemble, with no attempt made to use big stars to play familiar characters: what, no Rajit Kapur as Nehru? But the choice of a few actors makes things uneven. However adept the very talented Sidhant Gupta (so right in *Jubilee*) may be in looking and sounding remarkably like Pandit Nehru, with his khadi achkans and the red rose, he cannot escape the fact that he is a 20-something playing a 60-something.

Zakaria is excellent as Jinnah; in fact, this may be his best role in many years. McGibney and Bugeja, as the Mountbatten couple, trying hard to be fair to those they are leaving behind, are good too, with just a hint at the colourful view of the purported closeness of Nehru and Edwina.

As Gandhi, Chirag Vora, most excellent in *Scam 93*, is again a terrific lookalike, but his delivery is underlined. It could well be that

playing Gandhi automatically gives you a free pass into dhoti-*lathi*-and-sing-song-speech territory, but the curve of his nose stays distracting all the way through. KC Shankar as VP Menon has a juicy part, and he makes the most of it; Malishka Mendonsa as Sarojini Naidu comes off as a Delhi lady-about-town in her tasteful Emporium saris; Ira Dubey, who makes up another rare female character in this all-male party, is far too youthful, despite her artfully crimped-and-grey hair, to become Jinnah's loyal sister-and-companion.

The one actor standing head and shoulders above everyone else is Rajendra Chawla, who fully embodies Sardar Patel. He has been written strongly and clearly, and through the telling of this tale, he comes off the true architect of modern India, surpassing both Nehru, who had to put his fealty aside to give Bapu the ultimatum (if you cannot come with us, do not stand in our way), and the Mahatma himself, who cannot walk past his abiding sadness at the imminence of Partition.

Despite its problems, I'm glad that the series exists. The story of India and Pakistan, which came into existence at that stroke of the midnight hour, immortalised in the haunting words of Nehru, is still being written. It was a fraught freedom, with millions losing their lives and their livelihoods on either side of the newly-formed border, drawn in blood. The questions — what that hard-fought freedom has come to mean, and how free are we really — are still blowing in the wind.

Off Track

THE SABARMATI REPORT ★

Director: Dheeraj Sarna

Cast: Vikrant Massey, Raashii Khanna, Ridhi Dogra, Barkha Singh

SHUBHRA GUPTA

ON FEBRUARY 27, 2002, several coaches of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra station caught fire, causing the deaths of 59 people, many of them women and children. The train from Ayodhya, bound for Ahmedabad, was full of *karsevaks* returning after a ceremony held under the aegis of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Flames could be seen in four coaches, according to reports, but the worst hit was Coach 6, where the deaths took place.

The horrific incident was followed by three days of rioting in Gujarat: according to several accounts, the number of the dead was well over 2,000. The Nanavati-Mehta commission, appointed by the state government, concluded that the fire was the result of a pre-planned arson by a large Muslim mob; the one-member Banerjee commission instituted in 2004 by the government at the Centre declared that it was an accident.

Between these two conclusions lies a vast chasm, and what you believe depends on which side of the divide you are on. Because if there's one thing that's for certain in the swirl of communal conspiracy theories is that the riots, amongst the worst the country has witnessed, put into motion cataclysmic changes in the country's social and political fabric.

Vikrant Massey plays a 'Hindi reporter' Samar Kumar who accompanies his 'English-speaking' colleague Manika Rajpurohit (Ridhi Dogra) to 'Ground Zero'

in Godhra. In a flash, without any discernible investigation, both conclude that it was not an accident: '*aag lagi nahi, lag-waai gayi thi*'. It's never made clear just how the two reach that conclusion, but the film rolls on from there, the former sticking to his stand, the latter abandoning it, because, duh, political pressure.

The truth has been massacred, yells Samar, and everyone has forgotten those who perished in the fire. For the rest of the film, he devotes his energies, helped by newbie reporter Amrita Gill (Raashii Khanna), to get to the bottom of 'what really happened'. Manika's declaration that she was going for 'context and balance' is seen as a bad thing, the thing that suppresses *sacchai*: the irony of a reporter parachuting on-site, and claiming his conviction as the only truth is steamrolled in

over-long exploration-and-exposition, in which radicals controlled by the '*bagal wala mullk*' are shown as the real culprit.

After jumping down the throat of those who speak for balance, the film tries hard at doing a balancing act. How's that for more irony? A Muslim locality in Ahmedabad is shown rejoicing over India winning an Indo-Pak cricket match. A character declares '*imandaar log dono taraf hotey hain*' (there are honest people on 'both' sides), but makes it clear that the *dono* are Hindus and Muslims. And never takes its eyes off the fact that Bharat—that was India is where truth resides, in which those condescending English-speakers have been shown their place.

No nuance, just judgement.



Out of Place

KANGUVA ★★★

Director: Siva

Cast: Suriya, Bobby Deol, Disha Patani, Yogi Babu

AVINASH RAMACHANDRAN

FIVE VILLAGES — each having its own behaviour, its own problems, professions, and pursuits. There is a foreign invasion that threatens to disturb the status quo of the system. There is a hero who wants to do good for his land and his people, and there are external forces that won't let him do the same. There is a timeline jump of almost 1,000 years, and the way these two timelines come together is straight out of the SS Rajamouli playbook. Amidst all these familiar tropes lies Siva's *Kanguva* that revels in its familiarity, impresses in its visuals, but leaves a lot to be desired in the execution of it all.

Kanguva begins in 1070 AD with the tribal matriarch telling the kids a story about life, loss, memory and unfulfilled promises. It sets the right tone for the grand vision of Siva. Soon enough, we are transported to the present where we are introduced to a scientific research facility where unsuspecting young kids are experimented upon. Till here, Siva backs his ideas with just the right writing. But once we are introduced to Francis (Suriya), a Goa-based bounty hunter, we are in for some of the most tepid scenes of the film. They are disappointing at best, and irritating at worst. But once the film enters the 1070 AD portions, Siva gets a firm grasp on the pro-



ceedings. Almost.

The strength of *Kanguva* is the world Siva has created in his mind. And full points to cinematographer Vetri, art director Milan, and composer Devi Sri Prasad for executing the grandiose to the best of their abilities.

What bridges the gap between execution and vision is the convincing, even if loud, performances of the primary cast, especially Suriya. Bobby Deol, in his Tamil debut, gets a role that he has to grunt and growl through, and he is good. Almost none of the other characters register in our minds.

When traversing timelines is an integral part of the film, it is disappointing that we don't really get invested in its emotional core. Yes, Suriya and the kid are effective. Yes, Devi Sri Prasad's music attempts to tug at your heartstrings. But all of it feels like flippantly flipping through a history textbook.

Basically, *Kanguva* is definitely a spark that could have created a forest fire, but it settles to just gloriously burn down a few trees before gradually becoming a golden ember, a stark reminder of what could have been.

SHALINI LANGER

THIS IS politicsss," purrs Macrinus, the prime minister of gladiators, into the ears of an obliging senator. This is also pure entertainment. And who is to tell the difference?

It is tempting to think this is why *Gladiator* has aged thus into *Gladiator II*. Both have their corrupt kings, arenas, and blood sports involving innovative ways for men shod in shields, sandals and swords to fight to the finish. But if the first film, 24 years ago, was as much about palace intrigues, complex relationships and unseen dangers, the second dispenses with most of the politics, and adds more fights, a lot of animals, a man called "Ravi from Varanasi" who is a "healer", and has far little for its women to do.

The two unchanged constants between the films are the Colosseum and the equally regal Connie Nielsen, reprising her role of Lucilla.

Paul Mescal as Hanno/Lucius has huge shoes to fill, playing essentially the same insider-outsider role as Russell Crowe in *Gladiator*. Mescal is an unusual choice to play the role of a warrior-leader given his body of work so far. The work on his body apart — he is buffed but not too much — Mescal does his best to tap into the "rage" that drives his character after losing the love of his life early on in the film.

It may be unfair to make the comparison with Crowe, but so delicately balanced was the actor's portrayal of Maximus that it is hard not to do so. *Gladiator II* itself

harks invariably back to him and that Oscar-winning prequel. Crowe's Maximus came across effortlessly as a leader among men, the kind supporters are ready to lay their lives down for. He could be ferocious but also incredibly warm. Nobility is a hard thing to capture, but there Maximus was, reflecting a noblesse oblige, in robes or tattered rags.

Mescal can be one thing at a time, but never all of it together — though the task that he pulls off in bearing *Gladiator II* on his raw shoulders is no minor achievement.

The events of *Gladiator II* come 15 years after the first film, with Maximus having died in the first one and the "dream of Rome" as envisaged by the great king Marcus Aurelius now in tatters. Corruption is rife, poverty rampant, and the twin emperors who now rule the kingdom (Joseph Quinn, Fred Hechinger) are decadent, pasty-faced, heavily-eyelined jesters who spend their time in frolic and games (including a duel inside a royal room for their pleasure). Making the emperors so effete and ineffective is a questionable decision, leaching the film of the chance of giving Hanno real enemies.

The antagonist-in-chief is the very same Macrinus, who acquires Hanno as a potential slave/gladiator. Hanno impresses Macrinus by fighting off a vicious monkey in the arena by biting off its leg (yes). Macrinus is played with pure abandon by Denzel Washington, who is clearly enjoying his flowing robes, golden jewellery and his ringside — soon to be central — view of power. There is a dark history to Macrinus

that *Gladiator II* suggests, but never really explores, busy as it is staging so many fights. One involves filling the arena with water and sharks and involving ships to recreate a battle.

Nielsen's Lucilla remains in the palace, floating and sneaking around in the dark, doing something, something to achieve the dream her father Marcus had of Rome. Pedro Pascal is General Acacius, her new husband and a glorious fighter, who unfortunately doesn't have much to do after winning that first battle where he defeated Hanno's army. Though he does get that scene of looking out at the destruction he has wrought, his wavy hair framing his impressive jawline, to lament: "So much for the glory of Rome."

So no, besides that repetitive mention of Rome's "glory", "dream", "hope", and what it should mean for its people, *Gladiator II* is no *Gladiator*.

But the point of Ridley Scott — that choreographer of grand spectacles — may be that it doesn't need to be. When all politics is entertainment now, and all entertainment deemed political, why not focus on just one?

Last year, a TikTok trend astoundingly indicated that all men think about the Roman Empire at least twice or thrice a month, if not daily. One can safely presume they are thinking more Russell Crowe and less the pros or cons of a Republic versus a Monarchy.

And guess who last presented his ideas as 'The Dream of Rome', in a book? One Boris Johnson, the 'clown' who got crowned the British prime minister.

GLADIATOR II ★★★★★

Director: Ridley Scott Cast: Paul Mescal, Denzel Washington, Pedro Pascal, Connie Nielsen, Joseph Quinn, Fred Hechinger

New Heroes, New Battles



STREAMING WATCH LIST

BY ALAKA SAHANI



THE LOST CHILDREN

NETFLIX

THIS IS the amazing survival story of the Mucutuy siblings, and the heroic quest to bring them home. Four Indigenous children, aged 13, 9, 4 years, and 11 months, are forced to survive 40 days in the Colombian jungle after a tragic plane crash kills their mother and the other adults on board. The documentary features first-hand testimonies and archival material from those who risked their lives to search for them, including the Colombian Army and Indigenous volunteer rescuers.



DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE

DISNEY+HOTSTAR

DIRECTED BY Shawn Levy, the film features Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman as Deadpool and Wolverine. Its synopsis reads: "A listless Wade Wilson toils away in civilian life. His days as the morally flexible mercenary, Deadpool, behind him. When his home world faces an existential threat, Wade must reluctantly suit up again with an even more reluctant...reluctant? Reluctantest? He must convince a reluctant Wolverine to... oh hell, just watch the movie."



CROSS

PRIME VIDEO

THE CRIME thriller series follows Alex Cross (Aldis Hodge), a homicide detective and forensic psychologist who faces a sadistic serial killer who is leaving a string of bodies strewn around the city. As Alex and his partner, John Sampson (Isaiah Mustafa), track this killer, a mysterious threat from Cross' past appears, aiming to destroy what he's done to keep his grieving family, career, and life together. Ryan Eggold and Alona Tal also feature in the show that has Ben Watkins as its showrunner.

New Delhi: Asian Games bronze medal winner Prajnesh Gunneswaran on Friday announced his retirement from tennis. "Hanging up my racquet. Thank you," Gunneswaran, who rose to world No.75 in the ATP rankings in 2019, wrote on his Instagram account.

PTI

BGT UPDATE

Injury scare for Rahul in warm-up game

The India batter KL Rahul suffered an injury scare during a match simulation session at the WACA in Perth on Friday morning. The 32-year-old Rahul opened the batting with Yashasvi Jaiswal as India made their potential plans to replace captain Rohit Sharma who is likely to miss the first Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test against Australia at the Perth Stadium starting in a week. According to reporters at the venue, Rahul was hit on his right below off a bumpy short delivery from seamer Prasidh Krishna. Though he tried to resume his batting after some help from the physio, Rahul decided to walk off the field.

Kohli undergoes scan in Australia: Report

With just over a week left for the high-profile Border Gavaskar Trophy series, India star Virat Kohli has reportedly undergone scans for a mysterious injury. Kohli, who had a night-marish series against New Zealand, turned up for India's internal practice on Friday. As per *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the nature of the niggle is uncertain but a source confirmed to the Australian media outlet that Kohli did undergo scans.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

BRIEFS

Haryana to face Odisha in final

Chennai: Haryana will face Odisha in the summit clash of the 14th Hockey India Senior Men's National Championship after they beat their respective opponents in the semifinals here on Friday. While Odisha defeated Manipur 4-2 in the first semifinal, Haryana edged out Uttar Pradesh 3-2 in the second last-four match on day 12 of the competition.

PTI

Zverev beats Alcaraz to enter semis

Turin: Twice ATP Finals champion Alexander Zverev outclassed four-times major winner Carlos Alcaraz 7-6(5) 6-4 to progress to the semi-finals of the season-ending championship on Friday and leave the Spaniard on the brink of elimination. German Zverev came into the contest as the group leader with two wins from two matches — against eighth-seeded Russian Andrey Rublev and Norwegian sixth seed Casper Ruud — but needed to win at least one set against Alcaraz to book his place in the semis.

REUTERS

AIFF want domestic players to play more

New Delhi: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) and its affiliated units on Friday mulled on the possible restructuring of the Santosh Trophy and state leagues in order to give more match time to domestic players. Top officials of the AIFF and 32 Member Associations (MAs) from across the country deliberated upon the diverse challenges in each state in a three-day conclave that concluded at the Football House here on Friday. AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey chaired the meetings on all three days.

PTI

Sanju Samson (109 off 56 balls) and Tilak Varma (120 off 47) power India to 283/1; visitors take series 3-1 with 135-run victory

SANDIP G
NOVEMBER 15

IN THE twilight of Bullring, two Indian batsmen of contrasting styles but a singular devotion to stack as many sixes and fours as possible completed their hundreds. First came Sanju Samson's milestone, when he bunted a ball through the off-side and celebrated the moment with a flex of his right bicep. Three balls later, Tilak Varma rang his century with a scurried double. His celebrations were more articulate — he sprinted halfway down the ground, struck something of a statue of liberty pose, let out a guttural roar and blew kisses to the dressing room.

Their centuries comprised the spine of India's hefty total of 283/1, which the hosts fell short by 135 runs. India thus sewed the series 3-1, further illuminating their aura as the T20 World Champions.

It was only the third time two batsmen had struck hundreds in the same game, but that was the least meaningful or spectacular of their statistical embellishments. Their unconquered alliance of 210 was the highest stand for their country. Together with Abhishek Sharma, who reeled out 36 off 18 balls and would have felt regretful in the dressing room for squandering his start, they smote 23 sixes and 17 fours. The rate dropped a trifle when both nudged to their hundreds and when the onset of dusk aided seam movement for the seamers. Still, a six every fifth ball is a brain-twisting feat. The ball simply flew, and for a while as if it may never land. From six-shy, India's new wave of batsmen has become six-savvy.

Their onslaught, at times, was so absurd that it seemed they were just two graphic robots in a fantasy game. It did not matter how or where they bowled. The batsmen had the knowhow, touch, power and mind-set to split the gaps or clear the ropes. They made hitting look so farcical that they did more harm than good to the game as they demystified the art of hitting a six. The pair hit sixes with the ease of tapping a single, or stealing two. Perhaps, this was a sign of the game's next evolutionary leap.

The methods were different. Sanju, his strokes sounding like the riff of a violin, however violently he was hitting it, was



Sanju Samson (left) and Tilak Varma combined for a 210-run partnership to take India to the mammoth 283 total on Friday.

AP/PTI

sumptuous in front of the square, a bulk of his fours and sixes coming in the conventional arc between extra cover and mid-wicket (just 14 off his 109 runs arrived behind square). He preserved the finest of

them till the fourth ball of the last over. Marco Jansen bowled one back of length tailing into him from around the stumps. Sanju manufactured room by backing away a fraction and slapping him up and over

Captain Badoni tees off with a fighting century for Delhi

PRATYUSH RAJ
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

AYUSH BADONI started his captaincy stint in style, scoring a counter-attacking 116 not out on Day 3 against Jharkhand. Badoni shouldered Delhi's fight in their first innings, as his unbeaten century took his side to 238 for 5 in response to Jharkhand's 382.

At stumps, Badoni was accompanied by Sumit Mathur (19 not out), and the duo were involved in an 80-run stand for the sixth wicket, but the home team still trailed by 144 runs.

Badoni's job is far from over, and it was reflected in his celebration. There was no hop, skip, and jump, no animated celebration, the Delhi captain didn't even raise his bat, he just gave a thumbs up to Delhi teammates, who were clapping from the dugout.

Badoni walked in at number four with Delhi losing their in-form batters Sanat Sangwan (5) and Yash Dhull (18) cheaply, and Anuj Rawat (52) struggling to find the gaps. Badoni's knock was studged with 11 crisp fours, including the punch through the covers that helped him get to his century, and four big sixes, all of them against the spinners.

It was only Badoni's third first-class cen-

tury, but he showed his quality and why he has been rated so highly by the current Team India head coach Gautam Gambhir.

In 2018-19, the then-Delhi captain and current Team India head coach Gautam Gambhir was playing his final domestic season. During a match at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium, former India and Delhi pacer Amit Bhandari knocked on the dressing room door, asking Gambhir to watch a young Ayush Badoni play. Gambhir nodded but kept his thoughts to himself.

After retiring a few months later, Gambhir called Bhandari to ask about Ayush. Bhandari reached out to coach Tarak Sinha, who told him Ayush was playing at Siri Fort. Gambhir drove to the ground to watch, and was deeply impressed by the young batter, wondering how Ayush had not yet played for Delhi.

Once Gambhir became the mentor of Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) ahead of IPL 2022, Ayush Badoni was told by him that 'He will get a long rope this year in the IPL and won't be dropped just after a few games.' The assurance from Gambhir helped Badoni to settle down. After spending three years with the franchise, he is now being retained ahead of the IPL mega auction.

"Gautam bhaiya has backed me a lot. He has told me to just play my natural game. He



Ayush Badoni's counterattacking 116 took Delhi to 238 for 5.

has always maintained that I must never curb my aggressive instinct," Badoni told this newspaper during the IPL, earlier this year. **BRIEF SCORES: Jharkhand** 382 all out (Kushagra 156, Sharandeep 66, Simarjeet 3/52) lead **Delhi** 238/5 (Ayush Badoni 116 batting, Anuj Rawat 52) by 144 runs.

NUMBER PLATE

283 India posted their second highest total in T20Is during the fourth and final game against South Africa in Johannesburg on Friday. It was also the highest-ever total on South African soil.

23 India's 23 sixes are the most by a Full Member side in a T20I game.

1 Sanju Samson is the first batter to record three T20I hundreds in a calendar year.

210 Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma have recorded the first 200-plus partnership for India in T20Is.

past extra cover. His quick and supple hands stood out, as it had throughout the innings that was a fusion of silk and power.

As has been his nature in the opener avatar, he pursued boundary shots right from the start, even if his last two innings had yielded zero runs. That's the brief to all India's batsmen, bust or blast. It didn't matter that his initial strokes were edgy. When Gerald Coetzee slightly erred on the shorter side, he uncorked a pick-up pull shot reminiscent of Sachin Tendulkar in his pomp. He didn't so much shift onto his back-foot as he stood stationary and let his hands swat the ball to the fence.

Little then South Africa knew that this was the first block into the making of a gargantuan innings, an evening left chasing the round white sphere of leather that uncannily avoided even their shadows. Sharma and Sanju consumed only 25 balls for their 50. By the time South Africa ejected Sharma, India had already breezed to 73 in their power-play.

Breeze to hurricane

The breeze soon transformed into a hurricane when Varma hit the boundary-fleeing straps. Willowy and languid, he generates immense power from his crisp

bat-swing. Two hits over deep midwicket off Keshav Maharaj strummed his machine to action after a careful start. He combined old-world technical robustness and new age stroke-play. The masterful left-arm spinner was then thumped over mid wicket. The moment he realised that the ball was within his reach, he would smack the spinners on one knee.

The only factor that aided him, as well as Sanju, was the injury to Coetzee that forced South Africa to fill in with part-timers. Markram brought himself on — his two overs bled 30 including a 22-run over wherein Varma reverse-slapped him twice for a four and six. Tristan Stubbs' experiment cost 21 runs in a single over. Medium pacers Lutho Sipamla and Andile Simelane couldn't stem the deluge of runs with their cutter and slower-ball assortments. The team's hundred was soon wrapped up in 51 balls.

If South Africa thought India's batsmen would relent in the conventional middle overs, they discovered to their horror that Varma and Sanju turned remorseless, almost sadistic. Varma completed his 50 in 22 balls. His next 50 consumed only 21 balls, as he reduced the hosts' bowlers to props and fielders to onlookers. Under enormous pressure, South Africa creaked. Fielders misfielded, dropped sitters or failed to judge the trajectory of the catches. Even the return of a half-fit Coetzee could not reverse the tide. Varma cuffed his slower ball over long-on. His shots sounded like an axe slicing through a tree, so sharp and definite.

He shuffled around the crease, dishevelled the bowlers' lengths and threaded the ball through the unusual spaces of the field. In a pleasant antithesis, Sanju was always still after the initial trigger movement. Sometimes he just moved back and waited for the ball. Sometimes, he went back across. Whatever he did, the hips squared off and the forearms came through in a simple, pure swing. Nothing was wasted or excessive.

Soon, in the twilight of Bullring, they completed their hundreds, fully capturing India's transformation from six-shy to six-savvy group.

BRIEF SCORES: India 283/1 in 20 overs (Tilak 120*, 9x4, 10x6; Samson 109*, 6x4, 9x6) beat **South Africa** 148 all out (Stubbs 43; Arshdeep 3/20) by 135 runs.

ROUND UP

Shardul shines

All-rounder Shardul Thakur, 33, has not given up on making a comeback into the Indian cricket team. His seven-wicket haul (4/46 & 3/39) against Services has put Mumbai in command at the Air Force Complex ground in Palam, New Delhi. Mumbai needs 111 runs to win the match on the final day. "My only focus at the moment is to further improve my fitness, work harder on my bowling, and always give 100% when I step onto the ground," Thakur said. This was Shardul's best performance this season since he recovered from foot surgery, for which he underwent surgery in London this June.

ENS BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai 288 and 24/1 (Raghuvanshi 13) lead **Services** 182 all out (Pulkit 35; Avasthi 4/48) by 111 runs.

J&K beat Tripura

Vivrant Sharma and Abid Mushtaq made contrasting fifties in Jammu and

Kashmir's four-wicket win over Tripura on the third day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match here on Friday.

PTI BRIEF SCORES: Tripura 165 and 211 all out in 67 overs (Jiwanjot 45, Srinivas 6; Mushtaq 3/41) lost to **Jammu & Kashmir** 175 and 204/6 in 56 overs (Vivrant 60 not out, Abid 53 not out; Sultan 2/39) by 3 wickets.

Shami shines with bat

After his exploits with the ball, senior India pacer Mohammed Shami showcased his batting prowess, blasting a quickfire 37 off 26 balls to help Bengal set Madhya Pradesh a difficult target of 338. Shami, who came in to bat when Bengal were 219 for 8, smashed two fours and two sixes to further swell the total.

BRIEF SCORES: Bengal 228 and 276 all out in 88.3 overs (Writtick 52; Anubhav 4/76) lead **Madhya Pradesh** 167 & 150 for 3 in 41 overs (Patidar 32; Shami 1/55) by 188 runs.

PTI

PERFECT 10

Haryana seamer Kamboj in elite club, picks 10 wickets in an innings

PRATYUSH RAJ
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 15

GROWING UP in Karnal, Anshul Kamboj started playing cricket because his father Udhram Singh wanted him to lose weight. The seamer's story is similar to a fellow Haryana athlete and double Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra, who too was overweight as a kid.

On Friday, the Haryana medium pacer became only the third cricketer after Bengal's Premangsu Chatterjee (1956-57) and Rajasthan's Pradeep Sundaram (1985-86) to take all ten wickets in an innings in the Ranji Trophy. Playing against Kerala, his bowling figures read 30.1-9-49-10 as the visitors were bowled out for 291 in their first essay. Haryana were 139/7 in response.

Life had felt weighty a dozen years ago though for the day's hero. "As a 10-year-old, he was overweight," Kamboj's childhood coach Satish Rana tells *The Indian Express*. A 10-year-old Anshul was taken to the nearest cricket academy by his father, who instructed coach Rana to make him bowl so that he would shed a few kilos.

"The funny thing was Udhram ji wanted

him to become a bowler. He wanted him to bowl more so that he would run more and it would help him get into shape. He was right, after all, today the boy has created history," Rana recalls.

The 23-year-old is the sixth Indian to achieve this milestone in first-class cricket, a list that includes Subhash Gupte against a touring first class side from Pakistan, Anil Kumble in the Pakistan Test and Debasis Mohanty in Duleep Trophy.

On Thursday evening at the Chaudhary Bansi Lal Cricket Stadium in Lahli, Rohtak, Kamboj walked out with eight wickets and the thought of taking all the ten wickets. "I was happy with my bowling yesterday. When I was going to sleep, the thought of taking a 10-fer, crossed my mind. I told myself, if I would take the first wicket in the morning I will request our captain to let me bowl and finish the job," Kamboj tells this newspaper after his historic feat.

For the past four years, Kamboj has trained under Tejinder Mann at the Shri Ram Narain Cricket Club, Rohtak and the coach says that his strength is hitting good length throughout the day. "He is not rapid. But he has the knack of hitting the good length throughout the day. He bowled 30



Anshul Kamboj became only the third man, after Bengal's Premangsu Chatterjee (1956-57) and Rajasthan's Pradeep Sundaram (1985-86), to take all ten wickets in an innings in the Ranji Trophy. X/@Bccidomestic

overs in Kerala's innings, that lasted 116.1 overs. He not only picked all the ten wickets but also was the most economical bowler," says Mann.

Anshul's obsession with hitting the good length consistently started when coach Satish Rana showed him videos of Australian legend Glenn McGrath.

"Watching McGrath's videos became his hobby. He memorised McGrath's stats in a few days time and started calling himself the next McGrath as well," laughs Rana.

Anshul, who was also impressive in the recently concluded U-23 Emerging Asia Cup, admits his love for the Australian legend.

"He is the best. The ability to hit the good length consistently over the years is incredible. I have modelled my bowling on him but yes, I watched thousands of videos, where batters are dancing to his tunes," he says. "As I played more cricket, I realised my strength is also to hit the good length. My height is six feet two inches and because of that, I generate the extra bounce as well. When I get the ball in my hand, my main objective remains to hit the top of the off stump at least five times in an over," he adds.

Kamboj burst onto the scene when he took 17 wickets in ten games and helped Haryana lift the Vijay Hazare Trophy in 2023. On the back of that performance, he bagged an IPL contract with Mumbai

Indians and played three games.

"At the MI camp, I got the chance to spend time with Jasprit Bumrah. I feel those interactions improved me as a bowler. The one thing that struck me is when he said 'A bowler must have more than one plan to get a batter out. He always used to say always come for a match with good preparation. A captain can set the field but it is you, who will have to execute your plans. Those are valuable learnings for me," he recalls.

Earlier this year, Kamboj picked up 8 for 69 while playing for India C against India B in the Duleep Trophy match, which was the best first-class figures until this match. Sachin Rana says Kamboj is a very rare bowler, who doesn't struggle while shuffling the formats. "He played Duleep Trophy, then one Ranji Trophy, and went to Oman for the Emerging Asia Cup, which was a T20 tournament and now he is back playing the red-ball. He doesn't care about the format. You give him the ball, he will get you the wickets," says Rana.

"He has so much confidence in his skill sets. It is not something new. Right from the U-14 days, he has never shied away from bowling longer spells. If a captain will keep

throwing the ball at him, without asking the question he will continue to bowl," adds Rana.

Kamboj dedicates his 10-fer to his father, who has been battling "seizures" in the last decade.

"I am very close to him. He was the one who wanted me to become a cricketer but he has never seen me playing. He has been getting these seizure attacks for many years now. He does ask me a lot of questions about my cricket when I go home. After this match, when I will go home, I want to hand this ball to him," he says.

The youngster is not perturbed about the hype that this 10-fer will bring into his life. He says, "I bowled well and got my reward. I don't think it will bring any changes. I just want to improve my skill sets, nothing else. We have got a long season ahead. After this match, we will be playing Syed Mushtaq Ali and Vijay Hazare and then the last leg of the Ranji Trophy, followed by the IPL. There is no time to rest and celebrate this milestone."

BRIEF SCORES: Kerala 291 all out in 116.1 overs (Chandran 59, Baby 52; Kamboj 10/49) lead **Haryana** 139 for 7 in 61 overs (Ankit 27; Nidheesh 3/37) by 152 runs.

Israeli anthem booed, scuffles seen in fixture against France

REUTERS
PARIS, NOVEMBER 15

SOME FRENCH fans booed the Israeli national anthem and there were minor scuffles inside a sparsely-attended Stade de France on Thursday for a Nations League game overshadowed by frictions around the Gaza war. Seeking to prevent a repeat of violence in Amsterdam last week around a Europa League game involving Maccabi Tel Aviv, 4,000 French security personnel were deployed in and around the stadium and on public transport. Some 100 Israel fans defied a warning from their government against travelling for sports events, sitting in a corner of the 80,000-capacity stadium which was barely a fifth full.

With many staying away due to security fears, the 16,611 attendance was the lowest for Les Bleus at the Stade de France since it opened in 1998. The match ended 0-0.

Some boos and whistles were heard during the playing of the Israeli national anthem, which was then turned up on loudspeakers. Israeli fans waved yellow balloons and chanted "Free the Hostages" in reference to compatriots held by Hamas militants.

As the match got underway, there was a melee near the Israel fans' section for several minutes, with people seen running and punches thrown. Stewards quickly formed a barrier. It was unclear what had triggered the trouble.

Leading up to the game, several hundred anti-Israeli demonstrators had gathered at a square in Paris' Saint-Denis district, perimeter, waving Palestinian flags, as well as a few Lebanese and Algerian ones, to protest against the match.

"We don't play with genocide," one banner read, in reference to the Gaza war.

At the end of the match, two Palestinian flags were displayed at the south end of the stadium.

Israel denies allegations of genocide in its more than year-long offensive against Hamas.

Going into the ground, some Israel fans wore both Israeli and French colours. Two wore a t-shirt with Israeli club side Maccabi Tel Aviv's logo on the front and the words "Ni Oubli Ni Pardon" (Never Forgive Never Forget) on the back.

INTERVIEW: VISWANATHAN ANAND

'Ding in bad form is also a very strong player'

AMIT KAMATH
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 15

IN LESS than 10 days from now, 18-year-old Gukesh Dommaraju will begin his audacious bid to become the youngest world champion in history. To do so, he will have to prevail over the current world champion Ding Liren, in a battle where everyone — including Ding — seems to have already installed the Indian teenager as a favourite.

But with the world chess championship, there is seldom anything that's obvious, as five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand can testify.

In a freewheeling chat with *The Indian Express*, Anand spoke about what makes Gukesh stand out, his own role in shaping Gukesh's career and the need to block out outside noise about pre-event favorites and form. **Excerpts:**

With Gukesh, one of the things that the world has noticed is that he seems to be the most mature 18-year-old around. He's very serious, very focused.

He has shown at several clutch moments a certain amount of calm. That certainly suggests that he is very, very mature for his age. Having said that, everybody gets tested multiple times. And this will happen to him as well. There will be moments which are difficult. There'll be setbacks. That's quite normal. But during the Candidates, during the Olympiad, there are places where he showed that he's fully there, he's really focused and he can really raise his game. And at the Candidates, it was important to be as cool as he did and take some of the decisions he did. So that, again, it's a promising sign, right? I mean, there are many things you do that other people have done before, but becoming a challenger at the age of 18 really sets you apart because it's just not been done.

As someone who has mentored him through the Westbridge Anand Chess Academy (WACA) and has had a role in shaping up his career, what are the factors that went into him becoming a world championship challenger at 18?

At WACA, we set up a plan for Gukesh to become a stronger player. That the Candidates win happened this year is a phenomenal bonus. He peaked at the right moment. It was brilliant. He showed the maturity to take the



Five-time World Champion Viswanathan Anand raves about championship contender D Gukesh, but warns not to underesitmate Ding Liren. Partha Paul

prize after all. But he himself, his parents, his other coaches, they've all brought him up with the right values. He has this ability to block out unhelpful stuff. He's generally very well behaved. There are healthy values instilled in him. Westbridge is supporting him as a sponsor for this world championship cycle. So obviously, they help him with whatever kind of coaching he needs to do, whatever resources he needs. Really, full support. Essentially two years ago, when he just started to break into the top, I felt that what he needed now was a

top openings trainer, somebody who could help him with that and I connected him with Grzegorz Gajewski. That partnership has worked out brilliantly.

They not only kind of need each other, they're complimentary in a nice way. Gajewski continues to be his trainer to this date. And I think with me, Gukesh and I have had conversations (about the match), we talk about some experiences during a match, things like that.

What were the things that you told him



During the Candidates, during the Olympiad, there are places where he showed that he's fully there, he's really focused and he can really raise his game. There are many things you do that other people have done before, but becoming a challenger at the age of 18 really sets you apart because it's just not been done."

ON GUKESH'S RISE

There's no doubt that a year of bad form before an important match does matter. It does show something. You don't know if this form will continue or this is the moment that Ding is going to break out of it. If this constant focus on his previous form lowers your guard even slightly, he's strong enough to punish you."

ON DING'S RECENT POOR RUN

How much should we read into the form that Ding has had going into this World Championship? Will that be a factor?

Look, a lot of very important and strong players have read something into it. I mean, Hikaru Nakamura, for instance, referred to it. There's no doubt that a year of bad form before an important match does matter. It does show something. You don't know if this form will continue or this is the moment that Ding is going to break out of it. And you know that Ding is a strong player anyway. Even Ding is in bad form. If this constant focus on his previous form lowers your guard even slightly, he's strong enough to punish you. So my point is, a player should not be thinking about these things. He should go there and play the best move. To be honest, Gukesh didn't even ask me this question. He himself has come to the right conclusion. 'I will go there, make the best moves and I'll see what happens'.

When you played in your first world championship, did you ever experience those sorts of feelings, like nervousness and the feeling that suddenly you had prepared for something else, but this battle was something else altogether?

Almost every day, you'll have moments of doubt. You'll have moments when you think things are going to go great. Your opponent will morph into all sorts of things that he's not. You'll have an opponent and you'll think, well, what if today my opponent was able to show this side or do that or thing. So you're constantly dueling with your thoughts. Yes, you will panic, you will think there's something about the stakes that makes you want to get it over with. And that itself is dangerous.

Was this a sense that you only had during your first world championship or even in later ones as well?

The doubt comes in every match. I mean, there are moments in every match where I thought this is the end and then I thought this is going great and things like that. But with each subsequent match, you realize these thoughts are normal and you know that they come, they go. And you focus more on the job. So I think like anything that you experience once or twice, you do it in a matter of routine, but same problem. When you do it for the third or fourth time, the problem is not routine, but motivation. How do you get excited about it? So you have to be able to do both.

Tata Chess: Carlsen betters India's rising stars to take home rapid title

AMIT KAMATH
NOVEMBER 15

"I LIKE to play chess. It's my favourite hobby in the world," grinned Magnus Carlsen minutes after he had claimed the rapid title at the Tata Steel Chess India Rapid & Blitz Tournament on Friday, winning the crown over a field of nine other top players including five Indians.

Praggnanandhaa ended up two full points behind Carlsen but was second in the rapid portion of the event. Pragg was the best placed Indian in the standings, with Nihal Sarin (sixth place with four points), Arjun Erigaisi (eighth with 3.5 points), Vidit Gujrathi (ninth with three points) and SL Narayanan (10th with three points) following him at the Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium in Kolkata. The blitz section of the event will start on Saturday.

"It's very satisfying when I can still be quite good at chess, especially while facing the younger generations. For me, that's motivation in itself. I go to each event like I have never won anything before," Carlsen added at the press conference on Friday after his victory.

With the world chess championship on the horizon and the prospect of 18-year-old Gukesh becoming the youngest ever world chess champion in history looking realistic, Carlsen was asked if he would be motivated to play in the championship in the next cycle, particularly if the man with the crown on his head is a teenager.

"A long-form classical match really doesn't interest me against anybody. Whoever wins the title it will be tremendous. But I will not be seeking to challenge for that," Carlsen said before reiterating that on current form he thought Gukesh was the favourite against the current world champion Ding Liren.

Carlsen had a slow start to the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz tournament, being held to two draws in the first two rounds by Praggnanandhaa and Nihal. But Thursday saw him win all three games, including against Arjun Erigaisi. On his way to the title, Carlsen was undefeated and was held to draws by Praggnanandhaa, Nihal and Nodirbek Abdusattorov.

Carlsen picked his victory over Arjun, who is currently ranked No.2 in the world in the live ratings, as his favorite at the Kolkata event.

"I think the game against Arjun was certainly my favourite of the ones here. He's an extremely dangerous player when he has the initiative, when he gets to attack, and I sort of willingly got into a position where he had the initiative. So I'm very happy that even though my play was obviously far from perfect, that I managed to handle the resulting complicated position better than he did and to get the win there. Apart from



Magnus Carlsen was so dominant in the tournament that his rapid title was secured in the penultimate round itself of the Tata Steel Chess event. Partha Paul

'Based on form Gukesh is favourite'

Mumbai: Magnus Carlsen was unequivocal when asked who he thought was the favourite going into the upcoming world chess championship in Singapore between current world champion Ding Liren and the 18-year-old challenger from India, D Gukesh. "Based on the current form, Gukesh is a significant favourite. But based on peak chess ability, I think it's quite even. So if Ding can regain that form, he has a good chance. Also, Gukesh was quite vulnerable in the last tournament that he played. But all that aside, if I was to make a prediction at this point, I'd go with the guy who's played by far the best chess of these two players over the last couple of years, which is Gukesh,"

that, I think my other wins were because either my opponent didn't play in the best way or they were mainly sort of technical," said Carlsen.

Carlsen was so dominant in the tournament that his title was secured in the penultimate round itself with him defeating his one-time second Daniil Dubov, who had helped him defeat Ian Nepomniachtchi at the World Chess Championship in 2021.

"The first and the last games were most difficult for me here. I played well yesterday. But my level dropped a bit today. In the last game, Nodirbek outplayed me quite

badly and I should have lost that one for sure. So I am not thrilled about that," he admitted on Friday. Elsewhere, the young Vantika Agrawal ended up a commendable third place in the women's section with five points behind Aleksandra Goryachkina (7.5 points) and Nana Dzagnidze (5.5 points). Vantika was ahead of more vaunted compatriots like Harika Dronavalli (fifth place with 4.5 points), Divya Deshmukh (7th place with 3.5 points), Vaishali Rameshbabu (8th with 3.5 points) and Koneru Humpy (10th with three points).



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